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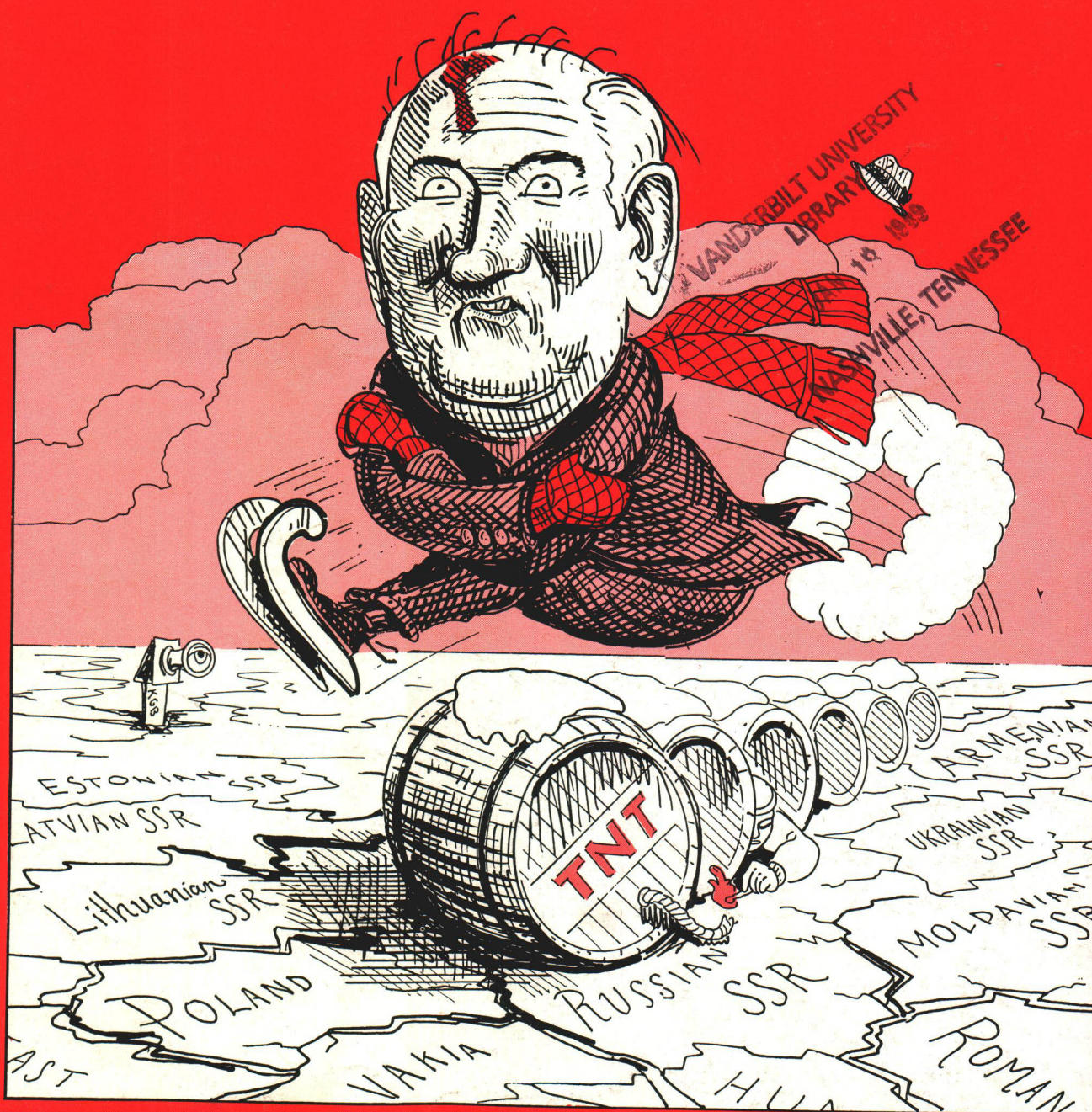
FEBRUARY 1989

A MONTHLY REVIEW EDITED BY R. EMMETT TYRRELL, JR.

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by Michael Ledeen



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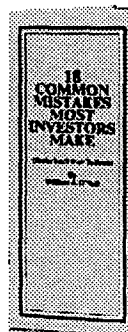
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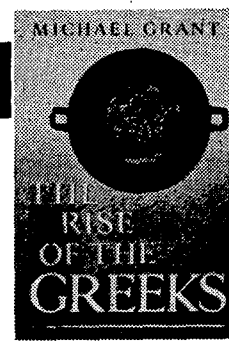
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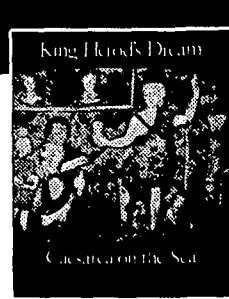
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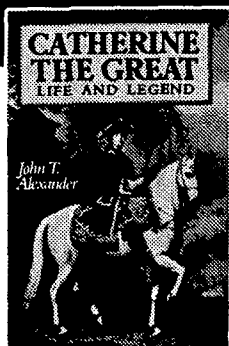


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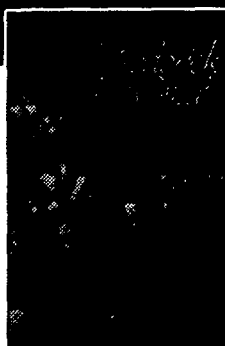
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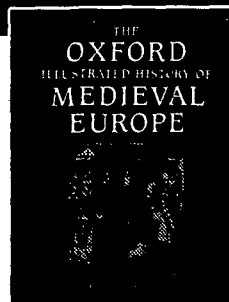


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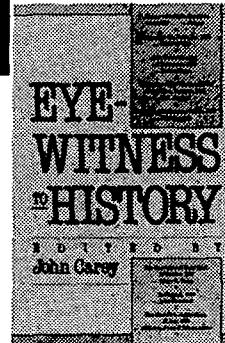
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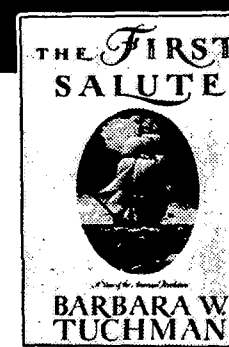
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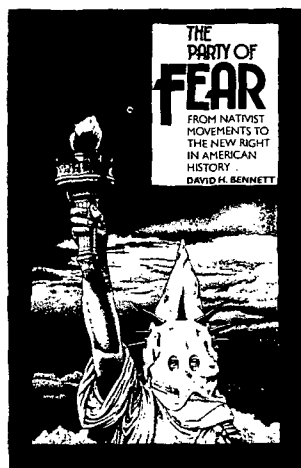
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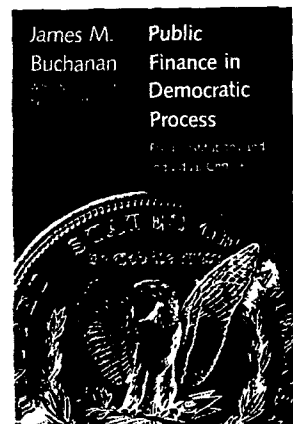
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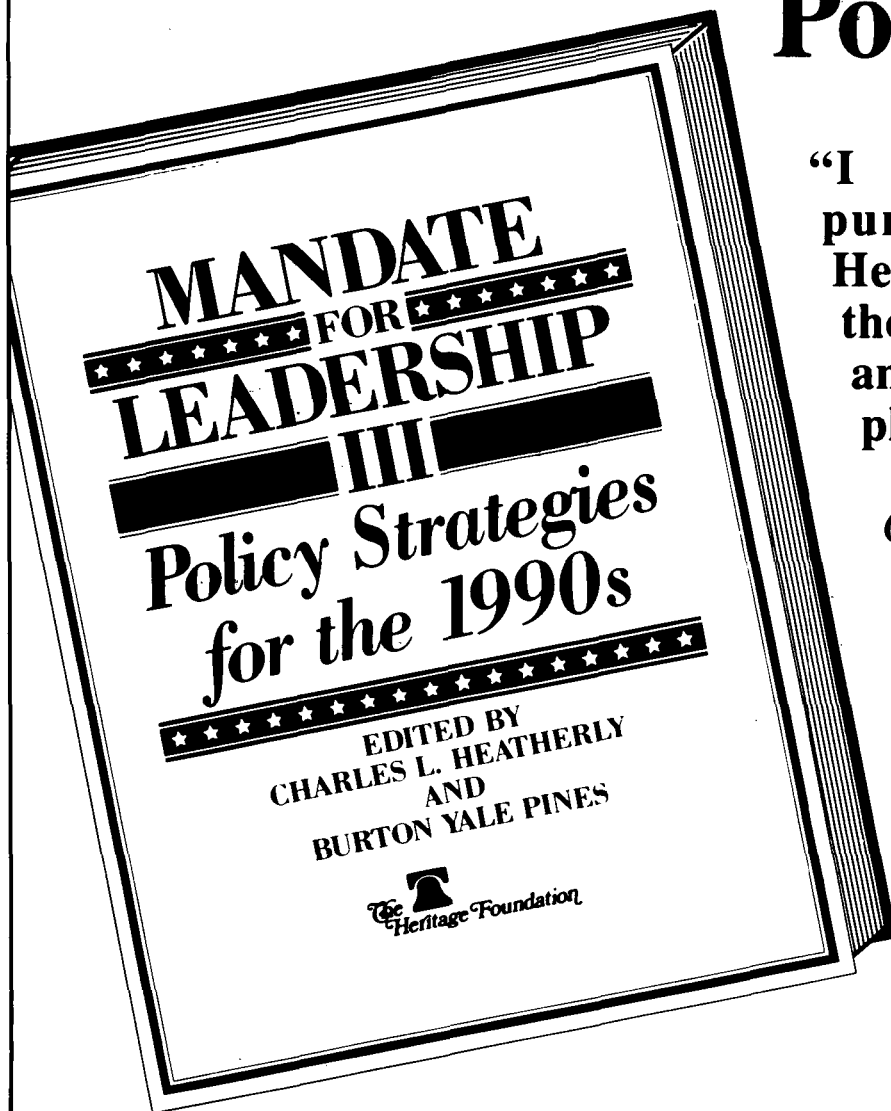
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THE CONTINUING CRISIS



• December is now filed away and with it all of 1988, which turned out to be a very unpleasant year, especially for those of us who had put our trust in the vaticinations of those medical experts who felt that 1988 would be the year in which singer Michael Jackson would disappear from the face of the earth, owing to his preposterous dietary proclivities. But no, instead it was Governor Michael Dukakis who disappeared, though he punctiliously follows the high-fibre diet of all enlightened Americans and, come to think of it, the family hamster. Six months ago Governor Dukakis was being widely boomed as the next President of the United States, and Vice President Bush was being written off as a sure loser. But now Mr. Bush is making cabinet appointments. Republicans are preparing for yet another round of Inaugural balls. And another Democratic presidential candidate, shaped by the incomparable *kultur* of bumper-sticker liberalism, has bitten the dust.

• On December 1, Mexico's new president, Sr. Carlos Salinas de Gortari, was sworn into office over the inscrutable complaints of opponents who held that his election was rigged, and in Miami, Florida, Mr. Ramon Jose Rodriguez, 23, a construction worker, passed away after a portable toilet fell on him from the fourth floor of a building site. According to Mr. Jim Lushine, a trained meteorologist brought in from the National Weather Service, the loo probably wafted from the uncompleted fourth floor propelled by 30-mph winds—the thing was equipped with rollers but regrettably no wings, a matter the Consumer Product Safety Commission might well scrutinize. Three Miami homicide detectives (one, Detective John Buhrmaster, being a former Florida officer of the year) have been publicly disgraced and transferred to new jobs for participating in a burp cover-up. Apparently Detective Ron Lemke made the infelicitous eructation on his police radio, thus necessitating an obnubilation of the dyspeptic oratorio. In Hong Kong, Justice Patrick George O'Dea has been forced to resign from that colony's supreme court, after it was revealed that whilst hearing testimony in a robbery trial, the erudite judge was also perusing a book.

The book's title has not been divulged.

• In Madison, Wisconsin, the full import of a typographical error is slowly spreading through the university community. Six months ago 4,000 diplomas—all with the state's name misspelled—were presented, yet only this fall was the botch discovered and then by a mere student. The University of Wisconsin faculty may be even more intellectually inert than Stanford University's, which is to say that the only thing that differentiates its members from your average New York City bag woman is that the Wisconsin dolts have lost their bags. The Associated Press reports that along with computer disks and textbooks, the best-selling items at Orange County, California's two public universities are condoms. Six thousand two hundred of the numinous sheaths have been sold since forty-four vending machines were placed in campus comfort stations. The brisk sale "definitely has a lot to do with concern about AIDS and the fact that we have an extensive education program on this campus," boasted Miss Laurette Beeson of the University of California, Irvine, AIDS Education Project—from which one concludes that either both campuses abound with sodomites and drug addicts or that Miss Beeson's education program is an exercise in scare mongering.

• The Rev. Jesse Jackson announced his intention to rename the Negro race. "Just as we were called colored," the poet gibbered, "but were not that . . . and the Negro, but not that . . . to

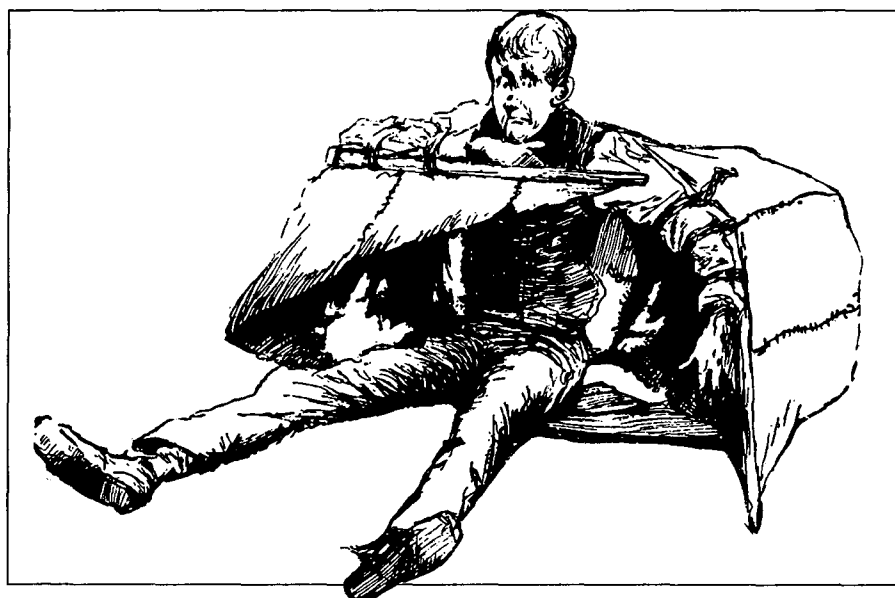
be called black is just as baseless." He has settled on "African-American," bringing this exercise in nomenclature around almost 360 degrees to the 1920s when progressive blacks renamed their race Afro-American and black conservatives such as George Schuyler snickered. The prescience of Mr. Norman Roth, who co-developed the heart pacemaker thirty years ago, was amply rewarded when he suddenly suffered second-degree heart blockage and received a pacemaker of his own. In the aftermath of the Republicans' fifth presidential triumph since 1968, eight Democratic congressmen led by the Hon. Robert Mrazek of New York purchased an island retreat in the Bahamas, and Speaker Jim Wright was elected to another term as Speaker of the House at about the same time that authorities in Los Angeles announced a sartorial innovation for their transit employees eminently worthy of emulation in Speaker Wright's domain—to wit, pocketless pants. Hoping to thwart employees from "pocketing" bus fares, a spokesman for the Southern California Rapid Transit District, Mr. Rich Jager, has vowed that the uniforms will be ready "within a month," and surely a pair can be found in Speaker Wright's size.

• The Space Shuttle *Atlantis* deposited a mysterious \$500 million spy satellite in space. Sausalito, California, declared itself the Republic's first cholesterol-free city. Soviet Armenia suffered its most devastating earthquake since 1046, leaving 25,000 dead and 500,000

homeless, and causing President Mikhail S. Gorbachev to cut short his suave tour of New York during which he delivered an address at the United Nations that left listeners of a historic turn of mind convinced that the world's greatest living dictator has boned up on the public addresses of the late Sr. Benito Mussolini. Many American journalists became quite mashed on Mr. Gorbachev, but not even Miss Mary McGrory surpassed the headline in London's *Today*, which asseverated above a picture of Mrs. Gorbachev standing in the Armenian ruins, "SAINT RAISA." *Washington Post* columnist Mr. Richard Cohen wrote his annual column on the occasion of the birthday of "my ole man." Curiously, this year he has refrained from writing a column on the occasion of his mother's birth, his Aunt Beatrice's gall bladder operation, the time his pants fell down at the zoo, his brother George's divorce, his brother George's emergence from the closet, his brother George's threat to sue, and something about his cat being treated for worms. Of course, Mr. Cohen has all next year to bore us with such narcoleptic stuff.

• Vice President Bush continued filling posts for his incoming government. Among his choices were Stanford University economist Mr. Michael Boskin as chief economic adviser and the Hon. Jack Kemp as secretary of housing and urban development. Washington, D.C. Mayor Marion Barry suffered the misfortune of turning up at a drug den just as the cops were moving in on one of his former employees, and at the University of Iowa conservative students upstaged local leftists' annual "CIA Off Campus" rally with a "Lime Jell-O Off Campus" rally that would have stupefied even the late Mr. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, also known as Mahatma Gandhi and Four Eyes. Prince Charles is fast earning the sobriquet Bon Mots Charlie with his objurgations of modern architecture. Most recently he described the reading room of the new British Library as looking "like an assembly hall for an academy for secret police," and Birmingham's central library as resembling "a place where books are incinerated, not kept."

• Sr. Carlos Mejia Godoy, the composer of Nicaragua's Sandinista na-



tional anthem, defected to Spain. President Ronald Reagan and his wife had their last medical check-up at Bethesda Naval Hospital. In Tulsa, Oklahoma, the joke was on the local police. There they besieged the wrong house after being called in to save a woman from an armed assailant. The assailant (who was in the house next door) tried repeatedly to surrender only to be ordered away by the officious cops who suspected him of being a nosy neighbor. In Dusseldorf, West Germany, a philistine judge has refused to rule that

a five-pound lump of rancid butter constitutes art. The repellent mess, titled "Corner of Fat," was dropped by a cleaning crew at Dusseldorf's Academy of Art in 1986. Its owner, Mr. Johannes Stuttgen, had sought \$29,000 until confronted by Hun thrift. With this issue, Mr. Terry Eastland becomes *TAS*'s Presswatch columnist, and Mr. Michael Ledeen returns to our foreign desk.

• Martyred PTL holyman Jim Bakker manifested signs of repentance, returning to the pulpit and offering to "get

a gun and blow my head off" if it would help Christianity. Christmas was celebrated with the usual threats to public nativity scenes by the American Civil Liberties Union and arrests of sex-crazed Santa Clauses. In Crawfordsville, Indiana, Mr. Donald Strong, the Santa at the Boulevard Mall, was arrested as a common frotteur for fondling women between the ages of fifteen and eighteen, the oldest of whom were having trouble enough maintaining their faith in the merry old soul. Yasser Arafat stupefied many and

aroused the suspicions of others when on December 14 he seemed to renounce terrorism and recognize the state of Israel. Then on December 21, 259 people perished on Pan Am Flight 103 when it was blown up by a bomb over Lockerbie, Scotland. As this column heads for the printer, the speculation mounts that some of Mr. Arafat's former colleagues were responsible for that bomb and decent impulse urges that justice be done. And Oman has banned Western pop music.

—RET

C O R R E S P O N D E N C E

October's Horror Show

Andrew Ferguson's memoir of New Orleans was a hoot ("Wanna Party?" *TAS*, October 1988)—the high point of the issue, and Bruce Bawer demonstrated, once again, that he's the soundest and most readable critic in the land. Both men strike me as, if you'll forgive the suggestion, much too good for *The American Spectator*.

But Professor Werner Dannhauser's defense of Allan Bloom was a disappointment ("Allan Bloom and the Critics"). I found it effusive to the point of smarminess, marred as it was by too many coy references to the author's friendship with Bloom and by his curious penchant for self-congratulation ("... brilliantly exposed in letters to the *Chronicle* by Werner J. Dannhauser and Arthur Kruger"). On one point, in particular, he left me unconvinced. I'm among those readers who, like the reviewer in the *New Republic*, were put off by Bloom's uncharitable—nay, venomous—portrait of his students. They emerge in his book as caricatures combining the least attractive aspects of the automaton and the barbarian: unthinking, uncultured, incurious beings, shallow and promiscuous, their brains benumbed by rock music and TV. Bloom professes to pity them; his book suggests, rather, that he despises them. Dannhauser's only defense is to point out that *The Closing of the American Mind* is dedicated to these very students—so it is, and so what?—and to assert, without support, that "an easily demonstrable love of the latter suffuses its pages." Granted that Dannhauser's space may have been limited, I'd be grateful for some evidence of this "easily demonstrable love" where I, and so many others, have found only sourness and hostility.

—T.E.D. Klein
New York, New York

Maynes' Point

In your December 1988 issue Michael Ledeen [in "Presswatch"] excoriates *Foreign Policy* for printing an article by Robert Parry and Peter Kornbluh, who report on a propaganda and disinformation campaign run out of the National Security Council during the Reagan Administration. In the same article Ledeen praises the editor of the *Washington Post* Outlook section, David Ignatius, for debunking such "wacko stories." What Mr. Ledeen fails to report to your readers is that Mr. Ignatius did not regard the Parry and Kornbluh article as "wacko." Indeed, he reprinted major sections of the piece in the September 4, 1988, issue of the *Washington Post*.

—Charles William Maynes
Editor, Foreign Policy
Washington, D.C.

Michael Ledeen replies:

Mr. Maynes, whose rumor-ridden publication is now the *National Enquirer* of foreign policy magazines, misses the point. Sure, the Outlook section of the *Post* ran bits and pieces of the hogwash that Maynes published, alleging—falsely—that the NSC and the State Department were engaged in "propaganda and disinformation." But Outlook editor David Ignatius made sure that his readers received, in considerable detail, a thorough debunking of the lunatic accusations. Mr. Maynes, of course, felt no such obligation to his readers. And that's the difference between honorable journalism and the sort of garbage found all too often in *Foreign Policy* nowadays.

Not My Department

Your scatological pooh-pooing of the Consumer Product Safety Commission ("The Continuing Crisis," *TAS*, December 1988) was gracefully received. However, because the man was inconvenienced by a hamburger, he would not fall within our jurisdiction.

I have forwarded the complaint to the Food and Drug Administration.

Yours in Public Service,
—Terrence Scanlon, Chairman
Consumer Product Safety Commission
Washington, D.C.

Blaming Baltimore

Carroll Doherty laments the loss of Barry Levinson's "Bawlamer" (and who doesn't?), seemingly at the expense of federal encroachment from the South, the Washington yuppies, and Edward Bennett Williams ("The WashBalt Syndrome," *TAS*, November 1988). But Baltimore—and I'm speaking of Baltimore City—has a lot to answer for itself, I'm afraid, for the way the city has changed. It was Washington money (UDAG grants), after all, that kept the Inner Harbor from going under. Like any good welfare recipient, Baltimore knows how to bite the hand that feeds it, and blaming outsiders (Mr. Doherty is certainly not alone) who arrive in "\$40,000" cars is easier than seeing the rot under the glitz; i.e., the complete absence of growth in the environs around Inner Harbor (just walk east or west on Baltimore Street from Inner Harbor), the profusion of sports bars and nightclubs at the expense of commercial growth (the Brokerage is broke, Charles Street is struggling, while the Power Plant boasts of being the biggest nightclub in the East and the old Fish Market becomes a new entertainment complex; Lexington Market is halfway there as it shifts from selling "most of the parts of a pig" to fast food that disappears quicker, especially to the weekend rhythms of city-sponsored musicians), the blight of public housing downtown, arch symbol of that absence of growth, and symbol, as well, of that housing's absence in Roland Park, where Jonathan Yardley lives, and in Ruxton, where such caring people as Reg Murphy and Kathleen Townsend live, and, yes, a pit stop, as one

sportswriter indecorously put it a while back, a place to get a beer and a crab-cake on the way to New York.

Why, I had the pleasure, even, of having a local pol (UDAG funded) ask me if I knew any rich Washingtonians who might want to invest in housing there as a tax write-off. What an attitude! But when one looks at the political scene in Baltimore City and sees the one-dimensional machine at work, or better, not at work (as in most troubled American cities), a machine that gives us such senators-for-life as Sarbanes and Mikulski, a machine that refuses to lower the highest property tax rate in the state and thus stimulate growth, a machine that has virtually driven business out of the city for the promotion of charm and tourism, then I can see why Baltimore City is such an easy mark for the satire of John Waters, and why ~~Divine himself said~~ when asked about his success, "It gave me the chance to get out of Baltimore," or words to that effect. Baltimore can turn itself around, but the political scene will have to change before it does. . . . Who knows, Mayor Kurt Schmoke may meet the challenge yet. Without Washington's help, let us hope.

—Harry Williams
Washington, D.C.

Queenan Assassins

Apparently, Joe Queenan is successful, financially and otherwise. Based on his article "Character Assassins" (*TAS*, December 1988), he strongly prefers that characters in American fiction be equally fortunate. Sorry, but it ain't so, Joe. There's more going on than the gritty details of American life depicted on "The Cosby Show." What's worse, those engineers, physicists, systems analysts, and investment bankers he so sorely wants to read about can just as easily be losers, drunks, wackos, addicts, or creeps.

(continued on page 45)

EDITORIALS



LIFERS ON CAPITOL HILL

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

The facts cannot be denied. Our Members of Congress are for the most part extremely hard working and very pretty. This latter point is somewhat surprising, for it is not easy to maintain personal beauty while engaged in the arduous work of the Hon. Members. Their days are entailed with meetings public and private, picture-taking sessions, lunches, dinners, and a host of receptions—often several each day and some quite gaudy. There are briefing papers to read, media appearances, appearances on the floor of the House, and journeys on corporate jets to faraway places for public addresses, conferences, junkets. The congressman's life is one of ceaseless toil, and Americans ought to take pride that these sleek, beautifully coifed, well-tailored lawmakers are probably the most *soigne* in the entire world.

There is, however, even in this great capital, an ever so slight apprehension arising from the fact that, though they are hard working, the Hon. Members need work hardly at all at campaigning for re-election. Their re-election is almost a foregone conclusion. In the fall election fully 98 percent of those Capitol Hill incumbents seeking re-election were re-elected, 82 percent by landslides. As the *Wall Street Journal* has noted, "The turnover rate among members is now lower than that of the Soviet Communist Party's central committee."

So secure is incumbency today that after an Hon. Member's perilous brush with democracy in his initial bid for of-

fice his position becomes a matter of lifetime tenure. Congressman Jamie Whitten has been in his seat for forty-seven years; in the 100th Congress, 16 percent of the members have been seated for at least twenty years. In the first year of George Washington's presidency, 40 percent of the House incumbents were given the democratic heave-ho. As late as 1946, 25 percent of those members seeking re-election were turned out. Now to lose office a member has to be hounded by scandal and running in a pretty conservative district. As Fred Barnes reported in these pages last month, the six members who lost last fall had all been accused of misconduct.

At any rate, there is a growing awareness that lifetime tenure is not what the Founding Fathers had in mind for the House or for any other elective office in the land. The House, however, seems to have rigged the electoral process so as to free the Hon. Members from the trouble of facing a strong opponent (and the tendency of other elective bodies across the country to do the same is growing). This past fall fewer than twenty of the 408 members up for re-election faced a serious challenge, and one out of six members faced no major party opponent.

Alarmed by this situation, House Republican Leader Robert Michel has just spoken out against the political action committees whose vast floods of cash aid the Hon. Members in avoiding rock'em-sock'em opposition at election time. The PACs were set up to circumvent the limits placed on campaign donations by individuals. Corporations collect donations into their PACs and support the candidate of their choice.

The problem is that corporate America does not think very boldly about politics and simply dumps its largesse into the coffers of House incumbents. By June 30 of last year, the PACs had donated \$51 million to incumbents and a mere \$3 million to challengers—\$15 million was donated to members who had no opposition whatsoever! So much money is available to incumbents that some use it to buy the support of colleagues in their drive for leadership positions or to elect friends to political positions back home or to pay legal bills, as House Speaker Wright is doing.

But if Republican Leader Michel wants to reintroduce the democratic process into House elections, he will have to do more than reform PAC rules. He will have to put an end to the gerrymandering of House districts and to the government-funded \$1.2 million office budgets available to members but not to their challengers. He will also have to alert the Washington press corps to the absurdity of a democratic body having less turnover than Mikhail Gorbachev's central committee. Our Washington press corps seems not to have noticed. □

SAVE THE CHICKENS

Revolve this news story in your mind. Animal rights activists in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, have been agitating for the dismissal of local Boy Scout leaders from their straight-arrow avocation because they were known to have instructed their youthful charges on how to kill and properly prepare a rabbit for supper. The massacre was part of a wilderness survival exercise that also involved rendering five chickens edible. The extinction of those five chickens just made the animal rights activists all the madder, and according to the last reports I received they were demanding that misdemeanor charges be brought against these Scout leaders for allegedly committing cruelty to animals. Julia Child could be next or perhaps the chef at your favorite McDonald's, at least as accessories after the fact.

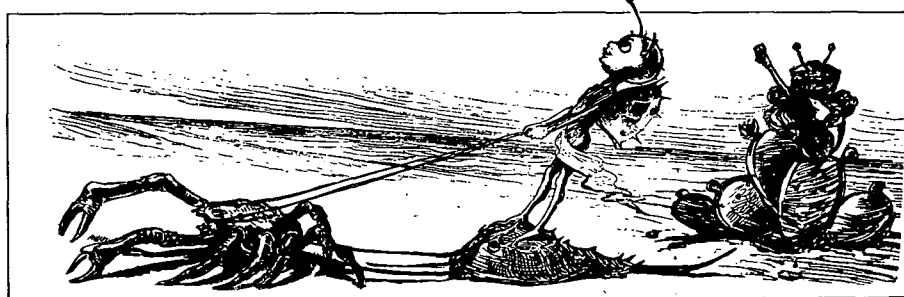
Nor are gourmet Scout leaders the only targets of animal rights zealots. Three months ago in Norwalk, Connecticut, police arrested Fran Stephanie Trutt, a 33-year-old substitute teacher from Queens, New York, just after she set down a potent pipe-bomb crammed with roofing nails outside the headquarters of the U.S. Surgical Corporation, a manufacturer of high-speed surgical staples whose program for

training surgeons in the proper use of these staples has aroused an animal rights furor. In her rented pickup police found a remote-controlled detonator and charged her with possession of explosives, manufacturing a bomb, and attempted murder.

What we have here is a typical American reform movement in all its glowing idealism and smoldering malice. Many years ago the historian James Truslow Adams astutely noted that there have been two broad categories of reform in America, the first constructive and generous, the second "characterized by fanaticism, the overriding of minority rights, and narrow-mindedness on the part of reformers who have been willing to sacrifice all else to attain their one end."

The aforementioned animal rights militants are reformers of the latter sort, though I doubt that they could agree on any "one end."

What would it be—a minimum standard of living for pets, barnyard animals, and laboratory animals? How about full citizenship and access to all federal entitlement programs? The Republic already recognizes that a humane society does not allow cruelty to be practiced against animals, but our long-standing strictures against cruelty do not satisfy the animal rights ad-



vocates, some of whom oppose all blood sports. Others oppose medical experimentation on animals. There are some who would arrest every butcher in the Republic and others who would shut down all pet shops. Quite possibly there are activists opposed to all of the above and to God knows what else.

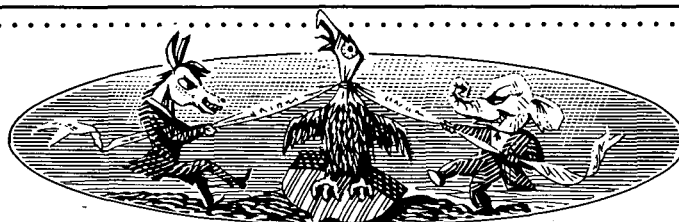
Such reformers view themselves as but the very latest edition in the great American tradition of reform, placing themselves grandly in line with the abolitionists and the suffragettes. I

should think that historian Adams would be more inclined to lump them with the bigots of colonial time who for the highest religious reasons persecuted Baptists and Quakers in Massachusetts, with the Pilgrims who banned play on Christmas and the Maypole on May Day, and with this century's Prohibitionists. These bully-boy pietists manifested the animal rights activists' same disregard for the rights of others and a similar narrow-mindedness and fanaticism.

Yet today's animal rights advocates are not merely public nuisances. They are a threat to their neighbors. How the Boy Scouts conduct their wilderness programs may be a matter for police action. The Solomons on the bench can decide that. Less debatable is the fact that experiments on animals have dramatically improved human health and happiness. Toxicological studies with dogs have allowed pharmaceutical companies to put thousands of useful drugs into production. Progress against

horrible immuno-deficiency diseases and leukemia has been realized thanks to bone marrow experiments on dogs. Studies of viral diseases in monkeys have allowed headway against AIDS and the virtual elimination of such diseases as polio. Organ transplanting would have been impossible without animal experiments. Americans do not need lectures on the humane treatment of animals nearly so much as they need continued experiments in pursuit of human health. □

CAPITOL IDEAS



THE MISSING GENERATION

by Tom Bethell

Many thanks for the enthusiastic response to my query last October about the "missing generation" of conservatives in America. Within a certain age group (perhaps 45 to 70), it has been suggested to me, there seem to be very few conservatives. Why is this?

"We grew up during the Roosevelt years," wrote Gene Thornton of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, "which accustomed us to the idea that it was up to the government to provide the remedy if the wrong was obviously beyond the power of the individual to right." Then "during the war against Hitler, we got used to the idea that any means were justified to right a wrong as great as racism." And so, after the war, "when we saw judges in effect passing laws that legislatures refused to pass, the intent of which was to bring black Americans into the mainstream of American life, it seemed to us to be right, or at any rate, not positively wrong. . . . I think that is why there is a 'missing conservative generation' in American life, which may even have been a good thing in its time, considering the alternatives."

Several people repeated these themes of Depression, war, and civil rights, although none as succinctly as Thornton. Tom Holt of Arlington, Virginia, noted that many people had heard stories "about how government had stepped in to help with WPA and other make-work," as he indeed had heard from his "officially elderly parents,

both of whom grew up in the Depression. It was not until my father started a small business fifteen years ago that their theretofore benign attitude toward government changed."

"I was born in 1932," wrote George Waldman of Reading, Massachusetts, "so I lie right in the middle of the generation in question. I remember growing up believing that there really was something sinister about conservatives—yet my family was not at all political. Although this belief now seems irrational, it was not uncommon at the time; nor did it seem unjustified. For one thing, conservatives were generally blamed for the 1930s Depression, which they had apparently visited on the American people out of greed and spite. One came in fairly frequent contact with these conservatives: they could be identified by the reactionary views they casually expressed regarding race, class, and religious orientation. At the time liberal intellectuals were seen as championing more enlightened views. The case was reinforced by two events: the advent of the racist Nazi regime in Germany, which was understood at the time to be a right-wing phenomenon; and, later, the widely heralded progress made by liberals in race relations in this country, exemplified by the civil rights laws."

Bruce D. Price of New York City noted that the missing generation was born circa 1915-1945, which he characterizes not as a period of two wars but as a single event—"the Great Calamity might be a good name." Price continued:

"But thirty years is only half a man's

life. And when we emerged from the Great Calamity, most people were *tired*. Additionally, they felt the good had won, so they were complacent. Exhausted and smug—that about sums it up. People wanted only to get back to a normal life and to an enjoyment of the fruits of victory. In short, there was little energy left for—and little need felt for—a sustained exertion on behalf of what might be called conservative agendas."

A number of writers expressed a certain amount of irritation with the missing generation. They had returned from the war and held "a huge party." Today they are a "fat and happy generation who have grown older, who still want more cake for their old age, when they are the ones needing it least." They will leave "the children of the revelers to pay the bill." (Miriam Cody, Amherst, Massachusetts.)

"In my experience," wrote Dan Hawkins of Helena, Montana, "they should be called the entitlement generation. They (generally speaking) are *entitled* to Social Security, are *entitled* to Medicare, *entitled* to early retirement. God help me if it is only the beginning of a trend, but the vital, valuable members of this society lost to retirement communities, motorhoming, and consumerism at its crassest are a great loss indeed.

"Where we were born into cynicism and have grown into conservatism (largely), the missing generation was born into ascendancy" and became cynical. "It's conceivable that such in-

nocence was unprepared to be jilted by a succession of progressively un-won wars: Korea, Vietnam, the Cold War, and Central America. A heart hardened, though not closed, to this country's virtues was inevitable."

John R. Dunlap of Santa Clara, California (and a frequent contributor to *TAS*), wrote: "I seem to find the very lowest voltage (or at most the sense that politics is just a game, something of low stakes and minor importance) among people born roughly between 1933 and 1943—the last decade of this 'generation' we're talking about. They are the Americans too young to have been caught up in World War II (though some lost a father at a tender age), too young (or lucky) to have been directly involved with Korea, and of course too old to have been touched by Vietnam or swept into the antinomian idiocy of 'the sixties' (i.e., 1965-73). They may very well be the most pampered, unruffled birth class in our history. . . . By and large they just weren't directly touched or troubled, personally, by any of the great socio-political calamities of this century. . . . They got off scot free, most of them, and they don't seem much taken with the conflict of ideas."

He notes that "something similar can be said about the students I've been getting in college [Santa Clara University] over the last several years—those born between about 1960 and 1970." And he is "wary of what's coming: the sons and daughters of the baby boomers."

"There is another factor," Bruce Price added. "War, it's reasonable to postulate, destroys disproportionately

Tom Bethell is The American Spectator's Washington correspondent.

the brave, the good, the manly. The million men who don't come back are precisely those most likely to sustain a nation through the simple device of leading ordinary and, it might even be argued, conservative lives. I think that the Great Calamity actually changed the gene pool of Europe."

There were three dispatches from Charley Burlingame, 57, of Taos, New Mexico, who concluded: "This is it. I

am giving you the final ungarbled word of the lost generation. I have talked this over with my sister and she does not dispute my latest theory. It is not the Depression. At least not directly. Nor is it the colleges of the fifties, though that was not a bad idea. It is pure demographics. Caused by the Depression to be sure, but it is the demographics and not the attitudes that gave us the grey flannel suits and

the other do-nothings of my age group, including Ted Kennedy. We all know and agree that people had fewer babies in the thirties. There are fewer people my age than any other age. That's why I don't fear Social Security. I'll get the final check before it goes broke."

Since there were no contraceptives in the 1930s, Burlingame points out, the birth dearth was a matter of pure abstention. "Who abstained best? The

people with the best personal discipline and best control of their lives. In short, the leadership took a ten-year break from sex . . ." (I have heard a similar "survival of the unfittest" theory used to impute inevitable decline to the Roman Catholic Church, whose "intellectually fittest" members become celibate priests.)

Several readers lamented the lack of leadership displayed by this "missing" cohort. (Maybe, indeed, the best were killed in World War II.)

"The right, the Republicans have no heroes," wrote Peter Ostrowski of Eureka, South Dakota. "In print they are great. In person they are standoffish. Barry Goldwater is as inspiring as cleaning out a dog kennel. Reagan—well, I admire him, but I've given up waiting for him to inspire a generation. It seems to be all he can do to keep the train on its track." John Poulin of Manitoba thought Reagan "more nearly resembles a chaperone" than "knight with banner unfurled."

Brent Hall, 49, of Tallahassee, Florida, wrote: "We grew up in the great era of pragmatism and quickly learned not to be conspicuous lest we suffer the attacks of liberal goon squads, teachers, and professors. I recall the way Robert Taft was sandbagged by the Eastern Republicans. No encouragement for me there. I witnessed the ripping of Goldwater because he dared to draw the line. My hopes faded with his defeat. . . .

"In the meantime we are out here, perhaps more of us than you suspect. I see the problem differently than you. It's at the top and it has to do with guts. When Jack Kemp can't rally the leadership of the Republican party to our cause, I become very suspicious. I will vote for Bush because the alternative is so horrible. But I fear for the party and the Republic."

Lawrence Scrivani of Cupertino, California, said the place to look would be the years between the world wars: "Did something happen during those years that predisposed the minds of a rising generation in favor of an activist principle?" Of course there was the Depression, sufficient to "chill the self-confidence of a generation of young conservatives." His next point was interesting:

"Another possibility might be the identification of conservatism not with principle but with protection of social status; specifically, with the thwarting of upward mobility for European 'ethnics' who comprised the bulk of the working classes then. Although these ethnics were essentially social conservatives, they could find a political home only among the Democrats. In order to construct a working coalition

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with them, social philosophies had to be subordinated to practical economic programs."

The following comments by Kenneth Aanchi of New York City should be read carefully. Before 1915, he writes, "when conservatism was dominant," the U.S. predominantly consisted of Anglo-Saxon and "related European stock." But then, with the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century emigration from Central and Eastern Europe, and the immigration caused by the Russian Revolution, many "anti-nationalistic" people arrived whose goal "was to create in this country a climate suitable for the forming of an international and socialistic country, in which aggressive minorities could operate without the fear of being attacked by the then dominant ethnic and religious groups."

"By lessening nationalistic and patriotic zeal and fostering the feeling of guilt among the 'old' Americans, the new minority elites could go about dismantling American traditions and establish their Utopia for themselves. This long-running objective reached its apogee during the Vietnam war. As these 'internationalists' became more assertive," a younger generation tending toward more traditional values has "slowly begun to realize that they have been duped; and are now beginning to assert some semblance of conservatism." (My quibble is: How did these "aggressive minorities" so quickly turn into "elites"?)

"I don't know where the missing conservative generation is, but I too have been waiting for its coming," Peter Ostrowski added. "I have often thought that once the baby boomers were married, bought a house, started to save for their children's college, there would be such a backlash against the politics of tax and spend that all the civil rights, environmental/EPA, OSHA stuff would suffer a sudden death." Instead his friends have PEACE license plates, toil in free medical clinics in Honduras, and think "shooting a grouse is more grave than adultery."

He concluded: "Maybe the reason is that people have lost faith in their own ability to provide for themselves and to stand alone in the world. They feel they need a government agency to protect them from evil in the world—corporations and the rich; they don't mind paying a third of their earned income to the government so that government can protect, inspect, and supervise all aspects of their lives."

I would only add that America was a conservative country until the 1930s, its conservatism assured by a Constitution interpreted in such a way as to protect private property. There was not much need for conservative philosophy when the Founding Fathers had not

only provided it but locked it securely into the structure of government. That lock wasn't picked until the New Deal. Republicans unfortunately had provided the justification by running ruinous fiscal and monetary policies at the outset of the Depression (causing it). Then came the war, and for twenty years after that there was widespread belief that state-controlled economies would surpass free ones. "Liberalism

at the time provided a big political puddle within which to swim," George Waldman concluded. "Who could want anything more? Things started to go sour in the 1960s."

My thanks to all correspondents; those quoted and those I don't have room for, including: George Steven Swan of South Bend, Indiana; Mark Smith of Claremont, California; Humberto Fontova of Laplace, Loui-

siana; Alec Hamrick of Cory, Colorado; Harry Johnson of Batavia, Illinois; C. E. Windle of Redmond, Washington; R. E. Kutz of Fort Collins, Colorado; Jonathan Athens of Columbus, Ohio; James J. Carter of Grand Junction, Colorado; and Thomas Donelson of Olathe, Kansas. I enjoyed hearing from you, and in a future issue I will suggest another readersymposium on a different topic. □

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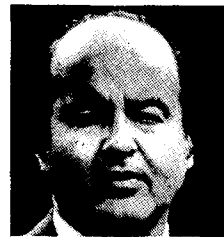
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Ambrose Evans-Pritchard

VOODOO DEFICITS

For the edification of George Bush: Ronald Reagan's and Margaret Thatcher's supply-side successes have already proved that the Keynesian orthodoxies on budget deficits are bunk.

Remember the Laffer Curve? It was the graph that Arthur Laffer drew on a napkin to show that lower taxes do not necessarily cut tax revenue. It is a beautiful curve, but it needs a decade to work its magic. The supply-side economists failed as propagandists. They allowed their partisans to excite unrealistic expectations instead of inoculating the theory by warning in advance, and repeating forcefully, that President Reagan's tax cuts would lead to several years of budget deficits before real revenues caught up again. They laid themselves open to accusations of voodooism by Keynesian economists, and to caricature by Washington liberals who saw it as a ploy to starve the government of funds.

Margaret Thatcher has rescued the Laffer Curve. She has cut top marginal rates from 98 percent on dividends and 83 percent on earned income to 40 percent for both. The basic rate of income tax has come down from 33 percent to 25 percent with further cuts planned. Yet the Treasury is awash with tax revenue. Nigel Lawson, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, is predicting a budget surplus of about \$18 billion for this fiscal year. That is 2.3 percent of GNP, the equivalent of the United States running a budget surplus of about \$115 billion. The British national debt, four times as high as that of some European countries only a decade ago, is coming down so fast that there is now talk of wiping it out entirely and putting the surpluses into an investment fund to be tapped when the baby boomers reach retirement.

Britain, perhaps, was a better laboratory for supply-side economics than was the United States. Taxes were much higher, indisputably beyond the point of maximum revenue on the Laffer Curve. The British economy had fallen

so far behind when Mrs. Thatcher took power in 1979 that there was the potential for leaps in productivity. The parliamentary system made it possible for the prime minister to control spending and lower taxes step by step, avoiding sudden deficits and a loss of nerve. No American President could hold the Congress to such a strategy as long as incumbency and profligacy go hand in hand on Capitol Hill.

However, Mrs. Thatcher's supply-side successes prove a point of immediate relevance to the Bush Administration: that the Keynesian orthodoxies about budget deficits are bunk. The evidence has been piling up through the 1980s. Keynesians predicted that the Reagan deficits would lead to inflation because they fueled "demand" in the economy. As everybody now knows, inflation plummeted as the Federal Reserve tightened monetary policy, more than offsetting the fiscal stimulation of the deficits. In Britain we see the corollary of this. There is a budget surplus, which should stifle "demand" in Keynesian theory, yet inflation is picking up. The British economy is booming in spite of fiscal restraint and enjoys the lowest un-

employment rate (8 percent) of any major country in Europe.

Something interesting happened when the British budget went into surplus: the trade balance went into massive deficit. Let us call these the "twin opposites." Britain is an extreme case, but not unique. Australia is in the same predicament. Germany is the other way around: it has a budget deficit and a hefty trade surplus. Looking at the industrial economies over the last forty years, it is hard to see any connection between fiscal policy and the trade balance. "You may as well flip a coin, at least you'll be right half the time," says Michael Darby, the assistant secretary of the Treasury for economic policy. Yet the concept of the "twin deficits" is so embedded in American opinion that even reporters for the *Wall Street Journal*, like Alan Murray, write as if it were self-evident that the U.S. budget deficit is the cause of the trade deficit. "People who aren't thinking clearly try to link the two. They're taking it straight out of undergraduate textbooks," says Stephen Entin, a former Treasury official now at the Institute for Research on the Economics of Taxation.

Some of the Keynesian arguments do not even make sense. At first the budget deficit was said to be causing the strong dollar, then all of a sudden it was causing the weak dollar. Peter Peterson's apocalyptic article "The Morning After" in the *Atlantic* (October 1987) is typical of the genre. He portrays the 1980s as an import binge on a credit card. This has become an article of faith for a whole generation of financial journalists and investment analysts who learned their economic theory in the 1960s, before capital flows came to eclipse the effects of fiscal policy. It is hardly surprising that opponents of the Reagan Administration have seized on the argument with relish. After all, it used to be conservatives who were denouncing Democratic deficits. It is also the only angle of attack left to them after six years of rolling expansion with low inflation. Who can blame Lloyd Bentsen for saying that anybody can buy the illusion of prosperity with "\$200 billion in hot checks every year"?

"It's arrant nonsense," says Milton Friedman. "The trade deficit is an economic blessing. It's enabled us to have a higher level of investment." Friedman joins classical economists in arguing that changes in capital flows have been driving the dollar up and down, determining the trade balance. At the end of the Carter malaise there was a flight from American assets. When Reagan restored confidence and improved the (real, after tax) yield on investment, the dollar became fashionable again. Americans stopped sending about \$100 billion a year overseas and invested it at home instead. Foreign capital also poured in. "The Germans and the Japanese weren't able to compete for their own capital," says Paul Craig Roberts, former deputy secretary of the Treasury. The dollar soared, and so did the trade deficit. Now that the investment expansion has run its typical course of five or six years, the capital inflow has slowed, bringing down the



Ambrose Evans-Pritchard is the Washington correspondent for the *London Spectator*.

dollar and, with a time-lag, the trade deficit. Britain is at an earlier phase of exactly the same process.

Britain and the United States have something else in common: low savings. The British household savings rate fell from 14.2 percent in 1980 to 5.6 percent in 1987. The American household rate has fallen from 7.1 percent in 1980 to about 4 percent now, although it is partially compensated by higher corporate savings. Over the decade Americans have saved, in a sense, through the appreciation of their homes, but that does not feed into the capital markets in the way that bank deposits and pension funds do. Gary Hufbauer, a trade specialist at Georgetown University, says that low savings have been the root cause of the trade deficits in both economies. Neither country can finance its own investment boom. Foreign capital has filled the breach but has distorted the trade balance in the process. If the central task of President Bush is to calm the markets by restoring equilibrium to America's international accounts, then he must enlarge the capital pool by increasing savings. The question is how.

Some improvement is going to happen for demographic reasons: the young borrow, the old save. Edward Yardeni of Prudential Bache Securities predicts that household savings will go up from 4 percent to 10 percent within five years as baby boomers enter their forties. The savings ethic of the Eisenhower Era will never be restored entirely as long as the government undermines individual responsibility, but the wounds of the Great Inflation will slowly heal. When I was growing up in the 1970s, I soon learned that only idiots save money. Those who put their savings in a bank received an after-tax return below the rate of inflation, while those who bought a house with a big mortgage quickly became rich as the debt was devalued. It takes a long time to forget such lessons.

The government does not help. Savings are taxed while mortgage interest is tax-deductible. Unfortunately, there is no political will to go to the root of the problem and invert the tax structure. A number of economists are instead tackling the problem circuitously, calling for a balanced budget in order to stop the Treasury from plundering the savings pool. This has a great deal to recommend it, so long as it is clear that the purpose is not to cut the deficit as an end in itself, but rather to raise the national savings rate. Washington has completely lost sight of that purpose in its bizarre conversion to fiscal fundamentalism. Alan Greenspan, the chairman of the Federal Reserve, made an astonishing

remark shortly after the election when he testified to the National Economic Commission, the Trojan Horse of higher taxes, that the deficit "courts a dangerous corrosion of our economy," and that *how* it is reduced "is far less relevant than that it be done."

"I'm very sorry Alan said that," says Milton Friedman. "It's the central bank disease. Every Fed chairman always blames fiscal policy for when things go wrong. . . . He's building an advance alibi for the next recession." There are well-known political reasons why tax increases do not close the deficit. The budgetary process is inex-

Paul Volcker testified to the same Trojan Horse Commission that a 10-cents-a-gallon increase in the gas tax would cut the deficit by \$10 billion, and a 50-cents increase would cut it by \$50 billion. This is a very peculiar statement. It assumes that other things are equal, which they cannot possibly be. The consumption of gas will fall. The increased cost of gas will have collateral effects on the rest of the economy, putting marginal companies out of business and therefore cutting tax revenue from other sources. "You don't get the deficit falling by the amount of the tax increase," says Stephen Entin. The way

If the central task of President Bush is to calm the markets by restoring equilibrium to America's international accounts, then he must enlarge the capital pool by increasing savings. The question is how.

orably spendthrift, and Congress simply spends the extra revenue to accommodate pent-up demands by lobbies, leading to further deficits, then further demands for taxes, and on and on in an endless spiral of statism. A study last year by the Joint Economic Committee found that since 1947, "a one-dollar increase in taxes leads to a 58 percent increase in the deficit, meaning a \$1.58 increase in spending." But there is also an economic snag. Greenspan's comment overlooks a wealth of data collected by the Treasury showing that it *is* of critical importance *how* the deficit is cut. Most Americans are locked into expenses like rent and car payments. Their savings are drawn from the discretionary income that is left over. "About 80 percent of a tax increase comes out of savings, at least in the short run," says Michael Darby.

The Trojan Horse Commission has not wrestled with the relationship between taxes and savings, and it seems to be overlooking the other half of its mandate, which is to recommend policies that promote growth. The closest it has come is to discuss consumption taxes, but even here, there is a catch.

to reduce the deficit with the best overall effect on savings is to restrain consumption by the state, which means cutting federal spending on transfer payments.

Murray Weidenbaum has assembled a package of about \$100 billion in cuts, ranging from diet COLAs and caps on Medicare to military bases and aid to the Middle East. "If I've left out your favorite special interest, I'll be happy to include it," he told an audience at the Cato Institute. The delicious irony of the doomsday rhetoric about the deficit is that liberals have ensnared themselves. George Bush can now exploit the same arguments to make hefty cuts for which Ronald Reagan would have been flayed alive by the grand press.

Frankly, however, I don't see why the deficit needs to be reduced any faster than it is already falling. Five years ago the deficit was indeed high, at 5.2 percent of GNP, but it has since come down precipitously. It was 3.3 percent of GNP in 1988. At the same time, the states and cities have been running a pension fund surplus of about 1.2 percent of GNP. The combined "public

sector borrowing requirement," as it is known in Europe, is therefore 2.1 percent of GNP. This is half the 4.1 percent deficit of 1975 (as it happens, the year of America's biggest trade surplus ever—*nota bene* "twin deficit" theorists). It also compares with estimated deficits of 10.2 percent in Italy, 3.6 percent in Canada, 2.5 percent in France, and 2.2 percent in Germany.

Robert Eisner, president of the American Economic Association, says that this combined deficit of 2.1 percent is an illusion. Most of the money goes to higher interest-payments that compensate lenders for the effects of inflation, which is currently devaluing the national debt by about 4 percent a year. A Treasury study by Michael Darby came to the same conclusion: "This inflation component has no economic effect, and should be removed when thinking about the appropriate level of the deficit." At the moment, the inflation component is about \$90 billion and virtually eliminates the combined deficit. Soon there could be a real (inflation-adjusted) surplus as baby boomers build up the Social Security trust fund. An increase in the Social Security tax is scheduled automatically for 1990. "The government sector as a whole is already in surplus on a structural basis, and this surplus is projected to become quite large in the near future," concluded Darby.

The myth of the budget deficit has its uses. It is a formidable tool for disciplining Congress, helping to reduce federal spending from 24.3 percent of GNP in 1983 to 22.3 percent in 1988. But it can be just as useful to collectivists as an argument for higher taxes. Indeed, deficits have historically been the ratchet mechanism of statism. However, it is not easy to raise taxes sharply once they have been cut, and the one clear mandate that George Bush secured in the election was "no new taxes." But there is a danger that the international markets will be spooked by the phantom deficits, precipitating a crisis and an overwhelming momentum for a tax increase. It could have the self-defeating consequence of sharp recession and much bigger deficits. But if the budget compromise after Black Monday is any guide, Washington will be too paralyzed to do much more than tinker at the edges. If George Bush can navigate through the reef over the next few months, he could find himself sailing out onto a beautiful calm sea. The dismal expectations for his presidency are essentially founded on the doomsday dogma that the country is crippled by debt. When the "Great Depression of the 1990s" fails to arrive, President Bush will look like a magician. □



Michael Ledeen

THE SUAVE GORBACHEV WEARS NO CLOTHES

Gorbo's New York speech was an admission of failure, an appeal to creditors for more money and more time, and a general cry for help. The major foreign-policy development the Bush Administration must deal with is the collapse of the Soviet empire.

The Soviet president stood stark naked before the United Nations in early December, and all the courtiers and ladies-in-waiting gushed and cooed over his imaginary robes and royal jewelry. The only thing missing to bring the full fairy tale to life was the little child crying out, "but the emperor has no clothes." No such voice of realism broke Mikhail Gorbachev's fantasy fashion show in New York.

Gorbachev's Soviet empire is dead broke, about to enter the international version of Chapter Eleven unless an emergency bailout can be arranged. In 1987, the Soviet Union earned between \$30 billion and \$35 billion in hard currency—less than half of what a major American auto company takes in in sales each year. In 1988, it will be even less, with almost a third of the empire's hard-currency earnings coming from credits courtesy of European bankers. No wonder that USSR, Inc. is talking about selling off its money-losers at the fringes of the empire: the Cuban expeditionary force in Angola, the Red Army occupation force in Afghanistan, and the Vietnamese occupation force in Cambodia. And no wonder that Gorbachev has now decided—if he spoke the truth in New York—to cut back on military salaries by reducing the size of his standing army.

The New York speech was an admission of failure, an appeal to creditors for more money and more time, and a general cry for help. The major foreign policy development with which George Bush and Jim Baker must deal is the collapse of the Soviet empire.

There is a considerable amount of evidence to suggest that the process of disintegration is fairly well advanced:

- The defeat of the Red Army in Afghanistan. Once upon a time, the

Kremlin proclaimed the infallibility of the Brezhnev Doctrine (according to which a country, having entered the Soviet Bloc, could never leave), but now they have been compelled to sue for peace. And they did so in a particularly humiliating way, as Deputy Foreign Minister Vorontsov traveled to Taif, Saudi Arabia—a country with which the Soviet Union has no diplomatic relations—to negotiate with the mujahedeen. That is as if Henry Kissinger had negotiated the Vietnam Accords with the Viet Cong in Havana.

- The end of Communism. Poland is the most dramatic example, for the two main sources of political legitimacy in Poland today are the Pope and Solidarity. As in the crisis of 1981, the Polish Communist party has no effective role to play. Communist parties are increasingly enfeebled in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, and anti-Communist demonstrations are growing throughout the satellites, even in East Germany.

- The collapse of the Communist economies. Gorbachev himself revealed that the growth rate of the Soviet economy has been only half what had been claimed by the Kremlin (and estimated by the CIA) over the past five

years. Poland, Hungary, and Bulgaria are desperately in debt. So poor is the Soviet Union that the Kremlin gratefully accepted foreign aid for earthquake relief in Armenia.

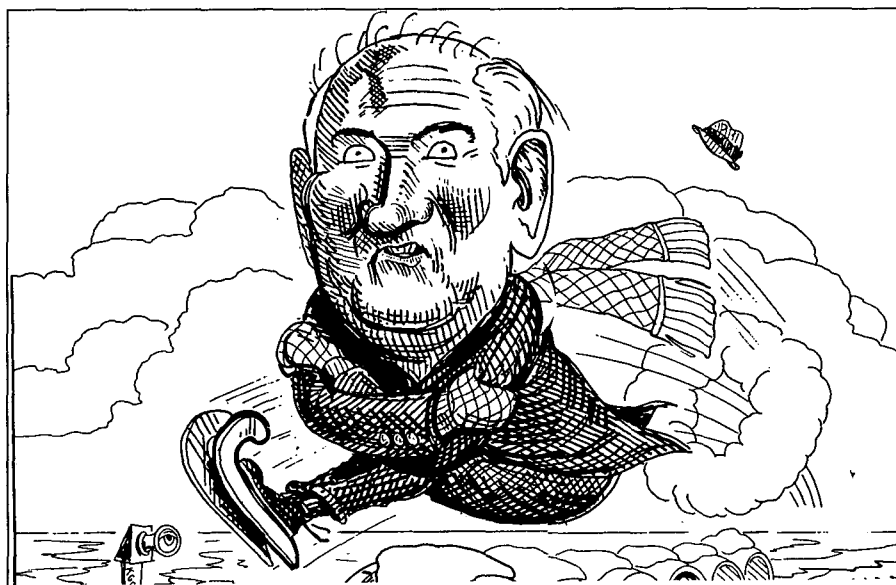
- The mounting discontent of the ethnic minorities and the Baltic nations. From the Armenians to the Latvians, Estonians, and Lithuanians, the "captive nations" are demanding greater freedom. The Kremlin had to send a massive military contingent into Armenia before the earthquake to forestall ominous public demonstrations, and there are similar movements among the growing Islamic minority. *Le Monde* commented that photographs of the pro-Khomeini demonstrations in Azerbaijan looked as if they were taken in Tehran.

- The bankruptcy of the distant outposts of the empire. Nicaragua, Cuba, and Vietnam are all economic disasters. The Ortega regime in Nicaragua—according to its own figures—has achieved a 50 percent drop in gross GNP after nearly a decade in power, which may be a world's record for economic ruination. Cuba sucks up \$5 billion a year to stay afloat (and is at the center of a vast drug-running operation to generate additional funds). Vietnam is a shambles.

All this has produced the predictable internal strains at the imperial center in Moscow. The symptoms range from a resurgence of the most vulgar forms of anti-Semitism to rumors of anti-Gorbachev maneuvering in the dark corridors of the Kremlin (just a few days before the New York speech, pro-Gorbachev leakers in Moscow were telling Western diplomats that there had been a failed coup in September—stressing the delicacy of Gorbachev's position). This should surprise no one, for Gorbachev's record—aside from his masterful "image making" on the world stage—is a near-total failure. By any objective yardstick, the Soviet empire is weaker today than it was when he took power. His vaunted reform program has not yielded any positive results, save in the field of public expression of ideas (and progress in this limited sphere is quite uneven). Indeed, so great is the fear of mass uprisings that a new set of laws has been passed, legalizing some of the worst excesses of Stalinism. For example, it is now—for the first time in Soviet history—quite legal for special security forces to shoot women and children in emergency situations. This, too, is part of perestroika.

Gorbachev has bet his future, and that of his empire, on his ability to convince the West to save him by permitting the Kremlin to obtain Western technology, know-how, and money. Left to its own devices, the Communist world seems surely doomed. With Western help, it may yet survive to fight another day. That is why Gorbachev hardly gives a speech on East-West relations without denouncing the restrictions we have put in place on the sale of high-tech items to the Soviet Bloc. And that is why he is wooing Western bankers, philanthropists, and businessmen with an ardor reminiscent of the heartsick heroines in the romantic novels of the last century.

But it is unlikely that Western bankers and businessmen can save the



Michael Ledeen is the author of *Perilous Statecraft: An Insider's Account of the Iran-Contra Affair* (Charles Scribner's Sons).

Soviet empire. For Communism has failed, and any true "restructuring," as Gorbachev likes to call his reform program, will have to go far deeper than cosmetic tampering with limitations on central planning, and inspirational appeals for greater industrial efficiency. As the workers at the Lenin Shipyards in Gdansk have reminded the Communist leaders of Poland, there can be no economic salvation for the empire without a political revolution. That is also the message from the publications made possible by "glasnost," to which the Kremlin reacts by extremes, sometimes shutting them down, sometimes pointing to them as examples of the new freedom. It is, finally, the message from some of Gorbachev's closest advisers, at least one of whom—the unfortunate Yeltsin—was removed from office for speaking the truth.

President Bush should keep in mind that he is dealing with the representative of a failed system, whose empire may be on the verge of collapse, and who is trying to con us into saving it all for him. We hold most of the key cards in the East-West game, and the key question is how we should play them. The first step in designing a game plan is to recognize that some of our policies during the past eight years are at least partially responsible for Gorbachev's desperate plight:

•Our insistence on a coherent program of export controls on military and dual-use technology from the entire Western world has made it increasingly difficult for the Soviets to obtain the technology that they cannot develop on their own. And while the KGB and the GRU have greatly increased their technological espionage against the West (this, too, is part of perestroika!), the USSR is falling further and further behind the West in crucial areas of technology. For example, at last report there was not a single supercomputer in the Soviet Union. Unless Gorbachev finds a way to obtain Western technology, his society is doomed to obsolescence, with all the commercial and military consequences it implies.

•Our military rebuilding program has clearly exhausted the resources of the Soviet economy, and the two great diplomatic/propaganda campaigns designed to slow us down (the anti-SDI program and the massive operation against the deployment of cruise and Pershing missiles in Western Europe in the early 1980s) both failed. Unable to compete, Gorbachev has turned, of necessity, to calls for a reduction in military spending.

If these policies are a prime cause of Gorbachev's welcome gestures, it would be folly to abandon them just at the moment we are about to cash in

on our investment. If we are to ease restrictions on technology, we want to be absolutely certain that it will not be turned against us and our allies. If we are to invest our money in the Soviet economic system, we want to be absolutely certain that we're going to get a real return for it. That suggests the following outlines for a new Soviet policy:

First, maintain the export controls that deprive the Kremlin of militarily useful Western technology.

Second, as Bush put it in an interview with me for *Le Figaro* in early November, there must be "no untied loans to the Soviet Union." Any credits that go to the USSR should be strictly tied to Western business activities, and these must be evaluated on a "business" basis. In practice, this will mean a relatively low level of Western investment, for there is not much sound business to be done in the miserable economic system that Communism has created.

Third, insist—as we have with all Third World economies—that there be a real restructuring of the Soviet system before we make available large-scale credits through the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund. We don't want to have a repeat of the enormous losses suffered through misguided loans to Poland, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Bulgaria, and Hungary. This means a free economy, not the phantasm of "free zones" in a command economic system.

Finally, revive the old notion of "linkage." We can help Gorbachev if he helps us achieve greater security. As a starter, we should require a withdrawal of the Soviet military presence from our hemisphere. The Soviets seem willing to cut back, but we want them out altogether. It would be folly to keep the Kremlin afloat if it continues to subsidize the subversion of the Western Hemisphere through Cuba and Nicaragua.

Above all, don't rush to any agreement. This will require patience, cool heads, and a significant effort to educate our own people throughout the Western alliance in the realities of international power relations. Time is working against the Soviets, and our opportunities are not likely to diminish in the future. President Bush would do well to begin by exposing the shameful policies of the Federal Republic of Germany, whose foreign minister, Hans Dietrich Genscher, has elevated appeasement to new levels of hyperactivity. Not only does he swoon at every gesture from Moscow, he even appeases the likes of Khomeini. Last November, in fact, Genscher traveled to Tehran and, upon hearing the venom of the

ayatollahs, returned to Bonn just in time to cancel a scheduled visit from the young Shah. Such a man should be politically discredited instead of being treated with deference, and George Bush, who will want to demonstrate his own leadership qualities quickly and effectively, is just the man to do it. He can start by reminding Herr Genscher and the rest of our allies that Western proposals for East-West arms reduction

are far more sweeping than those offered by Gorbachev, and that the alliance should pursue them.

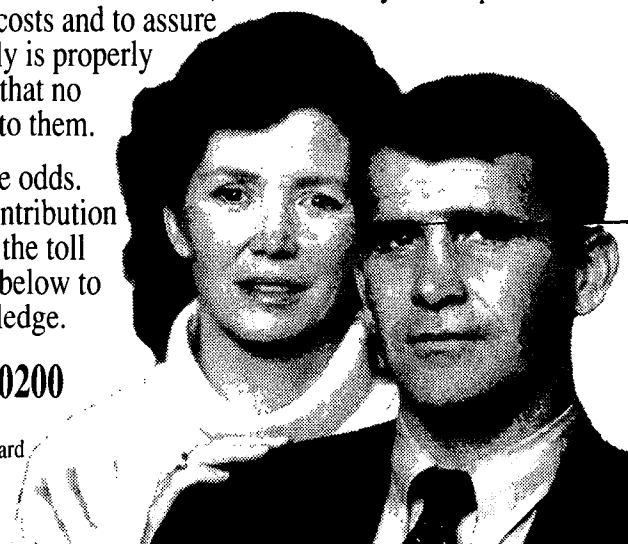
We are almost certainly at a great turning point in this century, and it has arrived in large part because of our own sound policies. As we enter the endgame, let's stick with the methods that have brought our historic opponents close to defeat, and gently dump them into the dustbin of history. □

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Joe Queenan

NICE DAY FOR A BLACK WEDDING

Herewith, a few nuptial horror stories in which no one points blame at the bride's mother.

One of my best friends got married in a satanic wedding service in New York City in the spring of 1974. Numerous warlocks and witches were in attendance, along with dozens of friends with no demonic affiliation. At the end of the reception, Elaine got so fed up with her new husband's antics—he insisted on wrestling with each of the male guests before they went home—that she knocked him down a flight of stairs. Six weeks later, she and her infant son left New York for good. It was a dud marriage, undeniably, but as wedding ceremonies go, she could have done a lot, lot worse.

Weddings in this country give the lie to any notions Americans may entertain that we can undertake serious affairs with circumspection and dignity. Beer bashes and smokers are our domain; weddings are out of our depth. I did meet a compatriot once who said ~~that she'd been at a wedding~~ that was not a total embarrassment to everyone concerned, but it took place in Asia and besides, she had no proof. I personally have been to weddings in VFW halls, weddings in Mafia-style lounges, weddings where string quartets supplied the entertainment, weddings with bagpipes, weddings where the couple wrote their own vows, and weddings where they didn't. They were all thoroughly unforgivable.

The highlands wedding was the inspiration of some Scottish-American friends who hired a bagpipe player they met in Central Park to do their reception. Diabolically, they also hired the statutory wedding band—"Darth Polka"—so the oldsters wouldn't feel left out. This insidious quartet of over-qualified war criminals not only had the tight black pants and fluffy pink shirts but also featured *two* accordions, doubling the evocative power of "Lady of Spain." The apocalyptic moment came when some fat drunk decided that the bagpipe player should join in

with the polka boys for a version of "Amazing Grace." The fat guy's body was never found.

At weddings, as at funerals, the first question people always ask is: "Doesn't the bride/corpse look beautiful?" The second question is: "Whose idea was this?" Whose idea was it to have your very best friend in the whole world—the guy you used to play football with in high school and who used to ride Philadelphia's dreaded Broad Street subway with you at three o'clock in the morning—wear a yellow ruffled shirt with a lace bow tie? Whose idea was the fish spouting Asti Spumante through its gills? Whose idea was it to lure the 79-year-old priest—who had married the groom's parents fifty-five years earlier—out of retirement, so that he could smash the old 87-minute indoor record for matrimonies? Whose idea was the cash bar?

You'll never get an answer to these questions. You'll never find anybody who's willing to say, "Yes, I'm responsible for all of this, and I am now ready for the garrotte." It's never the bride's fault, or the groom's fault, or the caterer's fault. In the minds of the finger-pointers, it's always the bride's mother's fault. She's the one who insisted on the Little Bo Peep headgear, the nine-tiered cake, the table napkins with ethnic jokes. Obviously, this theory is flagrant hokey. No bride's mother, no matter how sinister, could possibly rig up the kinds of weddings we have all suffered through in this country. She *had* to have help.

At a party a couple of years ago, a friend and I spent the entire evening trading nuptial horror stories. Kathy told the one about the organ catching on fire in the Delaware chapel where her brother was being wed. I described a reception where a friend of the groom pulled a knife out of his boot and said he'd use it on the bride's ex-boyfriend if he dared to try kissing her. Kathy talked about her own zap wedding at City Hall in New York, where the

justice of the peace hollered out at a bunch of black teenagers who had mistakenly entered the chapel before the service was over: "What do you think this is? The Apollo Theater?" I in turn described my own 90-second special at City Hall, after which a guy came up to my wife and me as we were embracing outside the chapel and said, "You got a dollar?"

I also mentioned my wife's missionary relatives who were married in Oregon just before leaving for a four-year stint in Indonesia. We didn't attend the wedding, but a few months later, while visiting the bride's mother, we were shown a video of the event. Inside the video was a scene where the soon-to-be newlyweds showed a second video to all the people at the service who were being filmed in the first video. The video inside the video recounted everything important that had ever happened to them up until the marital video. Evangelicals go through a lot of film this way.

They didn't make a video at my friend's satanic wedding, but if they had it would have been a doozie. Elaine had come to New York in 1972 with the right attitude: plunge headlong into everything, and stay plunged into it for at least fifteen minutes. Macrobiotic foods. Hallucinogenic drugs. Performance art. Medieval Lit. Satanism. Having decided to marry the man she affectionately referred to as "my little Belgian turnip," she also decided to tie the knot in an old-fashioned Black Mass. That's the way people did things back in those days.

The ceremony was held in her Soho loft on a Sunday afternoon in March. I came up with some friends from Philadelphia and got there early enough to meet some of the witches and warlocks in attendance, including the coven leader who would be conducting the ceremony. When we arrived, the whole group, attired in black robes, was

huddled over in a corner facing Lispenard Street. It was a bit off-putting to find out that satanists huddled, chuckled, ogled, and guffawed just like normal people. What's more, they had fuel problems just like everybody else. Remember, these were the days of the Arab oil embargo, when people had to line up for hours to get gas. Drifting over to the huddled group, hoping to catch some satanic scuttlebutt, I overheard one warlock muttering:

"I had to wait thirty-five minutes in Secaucus."

To which a devil-worshipping colleague replied:

"You should have hit the Shell station in Union City. There's usually not much of a line."

At the time, I had been vaguely toying with the idea of going satanist myself, largely because of hassles with my landlord. But now, having learned that demon-worship conferred no special powers on the practitioners of the Black arts—such as the ability to sneak up to the front of a line in a gas station—I lost all interest.

Just before the ceremony, the groom came up and asked if I would do him a favor. Even before I'd learned of his satanic predilections I'd had this guy pegged as a jerk, but this being his big day, I figured the least I could do was be civil. He wanted me to put his favorite piece of music on the stereo as soon as the lights went down and he and Elaine came into the room for the wedding. The selection was Grieg's "In the Hall of the Mountain King." It was the second track on an album of light classical favorites and marches. Unfortunately, when the lights went down I couldn't see what I was doing. As the couple—he in black leather, she in black silk—entered the room, I cued up what I thought was "In the Hall of the Mountain King." It wasn't. It was "The Stars & Stripes Forever."

Oh dear.

We flipped the lights on, got the music straightened away, then ripped

Joe Queenan is a writer for Barron's.

right into the ceremony. It was a jim-dandy, complete with what I took to be a grail, an ornate ceremonial dagger, and a phallic ritualistic instrument periodically elevated above the gathering in what seemed like a parody of the Catholic mass. Each time the phallic device was lifted, those in the know would recite, "Ave, Satanus," "Hail, Beelzebub," or something similarly deferential toward Moloch. They would also lift their right hands into the air, with the three middle fingers tucked inside the palm and the thumb and pinky protruding. This gesture was doubtless intended to signify fealty to, or at least admiration for, the Prince of Darkness. But the gesture was identical to one practiced at University of Texas football games. The Longhorns happened to have a very good team at the time—

they had won the national championship a year or so earlier—so they were in the news a lot. At the wedding I was seated next to my best friend—the sub-way companion mentioned above—who had dated Elaine when she was still living in the City of Brotherly Love. Sassy future IRS auditor that he was, Rob lifted his right hand in the satanic gesture and murmured, "Hook 'em, Horns—Texas Number One."

The satanists considered this very poor form.

The ceremony was soon over and the witches and warlocks shed their black robes. Everyone went into the back room and got ripped, none more so than the groom, who, a few hours later, when guests began to file

out, stripped to his underwear and proclaimed that no male guest could leave without first wrestling with him out on the kitchen floor.

Eventually Elaine became so enraged at his antics that she dashed across the kitchen floor, smashed him on the back of the head, and knocked him down eighteen or nineteen steps to the ground floor vestibule. For all intents and purposes, that was the end of the reception. For all intents and purposes, that was the end of the marriage; a few weeks later, Elaine was an ex-wife, an ex-satanist, and an ex-New Yorker.

I've been to all kinds of weddings in my life. I've been to the kind where half the VFW hall is reserved for the wedding party but you have to share the men's room with the vets, so the Vietnam vets in your half of the building

get into fistfights over Agent Orange with the WWII vets from the bar on the other side of the building. I've been to mixed marriages with co-celebrants, where baby-faced Episcopalian clerics fresh out of the seminary get smoked by red-hot rabbis fresh from the Catskills. And I've been to so many Motown revival weddings that I no longer find Marvin gay or The Miracles such a temptation. But I never went to another marriage like Elaine's. So if you happen to be in the marryin' mood this year, I suggest contacting your local warlock or witch and seeing whether you can't schedule a satanic wedding. There won't be any breast of chicken, flying rice, dueling accordions, or poorly tossed garters, but there probably won't be anybody named Uncle Jerry or Aunt Mildred either. □

William Tucker

PITY THE NEW YORK LANDLORD

The heir, the immigrant, the refugee, the operator, and the fiddler—legends, each one of them, in the rent-controlled city.

In *Slaves of New York*, Tama Janowitz's best seller about New York's underground art world, there is a scene in which "Stash" Mantello, a young hustler-artist, confronts his landlord, Old Vardig, about the lack of heat in his rent-controlled apartment.

Old Vardig lived down in the basement. [He] opened the door and I slipped in. Jesus, his apartment was even worse, if such a thing was possible, than my own. It was furnished with a variety of old cast-out furniture, broken chairs, and a sort of rotten desk with one leg held up by books. No windows, and old scabbed walls, cracked from the water pipes, which were covered in a fine, furry mildew.

"What do you want, Mr. Mantello?" Old Vardig said. He had the accent and persona of many nationalities—a big handlebar mustache encrusted with food, but whether this was an Armenian, Greek, Spanish, or Jewish mustache I couldn't say. The room had a rank smell. . . . Old Vardig looked at me with soulful eyes. "I was just heating up a little soup for dinner," he said. "Care to join me?"

William Tucker is The American Spectator's New York correspondent. His new book, *The Excluded Americans: Homelessness and Housing Policy*, will be published next fall by Regnery Gateway.

This is how the average New York tenant confronts his landlord. Expecting to meet Donald Trump, he discovers Old Vardig. As Irving Welfeld points out in his new book, *Where We Live: A Social History of American Housing*,¹ half of New York City landlords do not even have a high school education.

Yet none of this ever discourages anyone from believing his landlord is an evil manipulator with almost supernatural powers. Thus, Stash (who has not paid rent in six months) continues:

I thought to myself, Don't let the fact that he is pretending to be a kindly old geezer, all alone in the world, fool you. This

¹Simon and Schuster, \$17.95

guy is a rat . . . a wheeler-dealer and con- niver who owned half the buildings for miles, though he acted as if he were poverty-stricken, obliged to live in the basement and feed himself off cans of ravioli and peanut butter. . . . Oh, I was in a rage.

By now, probably everyone knows how rent control has ruined New York's housing market, creating a perpetual "housing crisis." Vacancy rates have been below 3 percent for a decade, and 17,000 homeless people—the equivalent of the city's police force—spend winter nights in more than one hundred welfare hotels and shelters. What few people comprehend, however, is the kind of municipal madness to which the system eventually leads. Rent control, after all,

promises people they can exploit their landlords. Since landlords are believed to be fabulously rich—and universally evil—no one raises much objection.

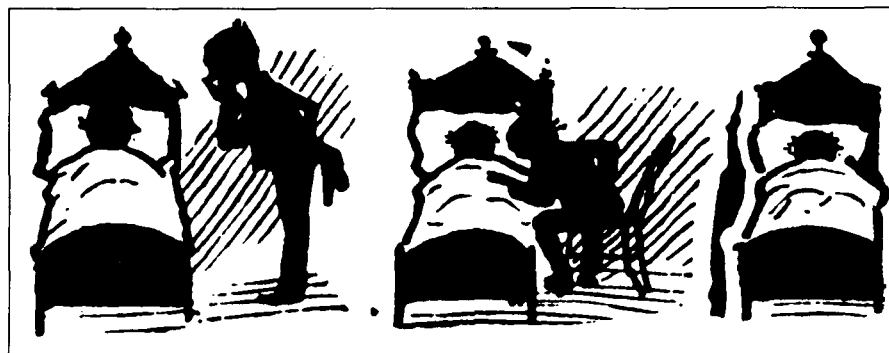
What drives people crazy, though, is that once all the rent-controlled bargains are gone, even reasonable housing becomes impossible to find. Everybody knows of somebody who has a terrific deal, but when they look in the papers all they find are studio apartments renting for \$1,200.

The explanation finally becomes that landlords themselves are subverting the system. What is needed are politicians who will crack down even more harshly. The solution for regulation is even more regulation.

The following are tales that illustrate this bizarre cycle. They are all true. There are thousands more just like them in the rent-controlled city.

The Heir

Paul Goedig grew up in a four-story brownstone owned by his parents, right across the street from Mt. Morris Park in central Harlem. The family lived in a basement apartment while renting out the top three floors. Goedig grew up and married, moved to California,



and became a hospital technician. His father died in 1981, but his mother continued to run the building.

Then his mother's health began to fail. She asked a man from the neighborhood to manage the building for her. He turned out to be a crook, stealing rent money and filling the building with friends who were drug dealers. In 1984, a serious operation left Goedig's mother unable to walk. She entered a nursing home.

In early 1985, Goedig came back to deal with the situation—a job he figured would take about a month. The thieving manager had fled, but the building was still infested with drug dealers. Given free rein, the tenants had ravaged the upper floors, ripping out plumbing fixtures for scrap and selling off furniture. In fact, the whole neighborhood was rapidly deteriorating from a combination of drug dealing and landlord-tenant disputes. All up and down West 120th Street, beautiful brownstone buildings—once owned by striving middle-class black families like Goedig's—stand with their windows boarded up by sheetmetal and cinder blocks. The ominous message, "Property of the City of New York, Managed by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development," is stenciled on every building.

Goedig immediately tried to evict the tenants. They fought back in housing court, telling the judge they weren't getting any services. They were right, of course—the copper pipes and wiring had long been destroyed. The court sided with the tenants. Goedig was told he would have to restore complete services to the building before bringing any action for nonpayment of rent.

By this time, several months had passed, and it was obvious Goedig wouldn't be going back to California soon. He borrowed \$3,000 to have the plumbing reinstalled. The tenants ripped it out again. He borrowed another \$3,000 and slept every night in the cold, darkened kitchen protecting the pipes. The tenants waited

until he left, then ripped them out again.

Goedig changed tactics. He shut down the heat, turned off the electricity, and tried to starve the tenants out of the building. The tenants retaliated by lighting fires and stealing electricity from neighboring buildings. By this time, HPD—the Department of Housing Preservation and Development—had entered the case on the tenants' side. Every time Goedig went back to housing court, HPD and the court charged him with not providing adequate services.

I met Goedig on a frozen February

"In China, when they want to take your property, they just kill you and get it over with," Rubin said. "Here they torture you. I think I prefer it the old way."

morning in 1987. He showed me through the building—including a glimpse of one of his tenants through a chain-locked door. The inside was a shambles, although traces of its former elegance shone through. Crack vials littered the upper bedrooms. For the third or fourth time, Goedig confiscated fifty feet of heavy-duty electrical wire the tenants were using to steal power from a neighbor's basement.

Goedig took me downstairs into his family's old apartment. The tenants had long since broken through the locked door and were using it to store sinks stolen from a nearby construction site. His mother's old wheelchair stood eerily in the center of the living room. Sifting through the ransacked remains of his old bedroom, I found a picture of Goedig when he was eight years old. He showed little emotion, but he took it home with him.

Sitting in a neighborhood bar an hour later, I asked Goedig why he persisted. He had been sleeping on

friends' couches for two years, lost touch with his career, and—although nothing much was said—seemed to have watched his marriage fail as well.

"Everything my mother and father worked for during their entire lifetime is wrapped up in that building," he told me. "As it stands now, that building is worth \$75,000. Fixed up it's probably worth half-a-million. I could fill it with good tenants in five minutes, people who would pay the rent every month and never give me a bit of trouble.

"But the city government doesn't want that. They say they want to save housing, but first they want to destroy

housed hundreds of small factories, including the nation's first electrical industry.

The industries soon moved out, but for decades the city government refused to rezone the area for other uses. Eventually, whole blocks, characterized by distinctive cast-iron facades, stood vacant. In the 1960s, desperate landlords started renting entire floors to artists, who—using their own money—transformed them into residential studios. Because the arrangements were illegal—and because the tenants were often providing fixtures and amenities for themselves—rents were remarkably low. A whole industrial floor of 2,000-3,000 square feet could rent for only a few hundred dollars. Out of this transformation grew the SoHo art district.

When the city government finally caught up by rezoning the area for residences, tenants and landlords found themselves in a delicate situation. Tenants had often spent thousands of dollars making the lofts habitable. But with residences now legal, landlords could offer leases, renovate buildings themselves—and charge much higher rents. Rather than let the parties work things out themselves, the city government set up the Loft Board, a new regulatory agency that—once again—has resolved most disputes by ruling in favor of the tenant.

Jevmerov had two such artist-tenants in his building. One was a fairly successful contemporary painter and his wife, who rented the entire third floor for \$450 a month. Above him was an artist from New Zealand who had the same arrangement. Neither had a lease but both claimed to have a verbal agreement from the previous landlord to keep the rent at \$450 in perpetuity.

Jevmerov set up his workshop on the first floor, built an apartment for himself on the second floor, and used the fifth floor for a warehouse. Carrying a \$3,000 monthly mortgage, however, he was forced to subsidize his two tenants. He asked them to pay \$1,000 a month rent. The third-floor artist immediately went to the Loft Board for protection.

The Loft Board legalized the rent at \$450 a month and put the apartment under rent stabilization, meaning rents could climb only about 5-10 percent per year. In addition, the Loft Board told Jevmerov he would have to bring the building into compliance with the residential building code. Jevmerov was forced to spend \$150,000 in additional borrowed money to make the two \$450 apartments legal.

By this time, Jevmerov realized that the New Zealand tenant wasn't using his apartment at all. He was actually living in New Zealand and

small owners so they can take over all the buildings for themselves. Everything my tenants know about dodging rent and beating eviction they learned from the Department of Housing Preservation and Development. They train tenants down there to destroy their landlords."

It was a miserably cold day. Trying to find a more cheerful subject, I asked him how he liked California.

"Beautiful," he said. "It's relaxing. The sun shines all the time."

"It must seem like coming back to the Old World to be back here."

He gave me a wry little smile. "Brave New World," he said.

• • •

There is a T-shirt widely sold in New York that bears the following message: "Live Cheap. Marry Your Shrink and Screw Your Landlord."

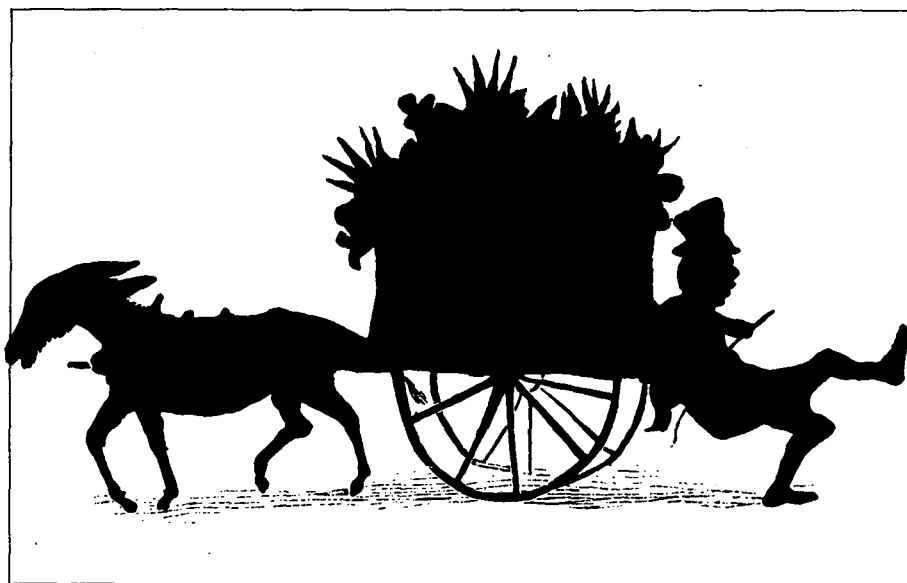
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The Immigrant

Brian Jevmerov left Yugoslavia when he was fourteen. His parents wanted him to have a career so they helped him escape. He has not seen them since.

Trained as a carpenter, Jevmerov did an apprenticeship for ten years, then started his own business doing customized woodwork interiors. He built a reputation and soon had his own shop with a dozen employees. He rented for a while, then decided to buy his own building.

In 1983, at the age of 28, Jevmerov purchased an old, five-story industrial structure in lower Manhattan. The building is part of the "loft district," an old industrial sector that once



maintaining the New York address only to avoid paying New Zealand's high income taxes. Jevmerov went to housing court for an eviction. Predictably, the tenant flew all the way from New Zealand to defend the apartment. He claimed to be living with his parents in New Zealand only temporarily while studying art. The judge let him keep the apartment.

Jevmerov's business was going well—he had thirty employees—but now the third-floor tenants began to complain about having a woodworking operation in their building. They said it created too much dust. The couple complained to the EPA, which demanded that Jevmerov spend another \$200,000 to comply with dust-control regulations. Jevmerov borrowed more money and made more renovations. The artist couple still kept complaining and the EPA eventually fined Jevmerov \$15,000.

In 1985, two years after he had bought the building, Jevmerov went into Chapter Eleven. "The building was sucking me dry," he said. He was forced to lay off most of his employees.

Jevmerov offered the third-floor couple \$25,000 to vacate. They demanded \$100,000. In 1986, Jevmerov lined up a buyer for the building who agreed to pay the couple \$100,000. They immediately upped their demand to \$150,000. The buyer backed out. No one else would buy the building because of the problem with the tenants. In 1988, Jevmerov went into liquidation and lost everything.

"I worked eighteen years to make something for myself and now I have nothing," said Jevmerov. "These people cry poverty but they make much more money than I do. They think the world owes them a living because they're artists. Well, I'm an artist too. The difference is I have to work for a living."

• • •

When Robert Chambers, the "Preppie Murderer," was charged with killing Jennifer Levin during a late-night tryst in Central Park, his mother raised the legal fees by doing what everybody else in New York does when they need money—she stopped paying rent. Phyllis Chambers withheld \$26,000 in rent over two years on her \$2,300-a-month Upper East Side apartment. The housing court eventually forgave her \$10,000 back rent because her living-room ceiling had a leak.

Robert Chambers, represented by top-of-the-line defense attorney Jack Litman, eventually pleaded guilty to manslaughter and is serving a five-year-minimum sentence. Mrs. Chambers is

currently suing her landlord for an additional \$40,000. She claims the water leak caused damage to her rugs and wallpaper.

• • •

The Refugee

Claudette Rubin is a tough woman—a Chinese immigrant, about 50, with jet-black hair and a guttural voice. Members of her family once operated a hotel in Szechwan Province. The building was confiscated during the Cultural Revolution and half her family was murdered. Rubin had escaped

"I decided I would prove to my tenants I was different," Vail said. "I would provide them services, make repairs, show them I care about the building."

with her parents in 1949 and settled in the United States, where she studied architecture and married an American.

Later divorced, Rubin ran her own contracting business in New Jersey, rehabilitating old housing. After a decade, she decided to try New York. "I admit I was bored in New Jersey," she said. "There are so many more beautiful old buildings in New York that need rescuing. It was a challenge."

She started with a loft building on the Lower East Side. Rubin took the bottom floor and had tenants on the top three. It was another illegal arrangement, winked at by officials. There was no central heating, but each tenant provided his own heat. For a whole 2,000-square-foot floor, Rubin collected \$500.

In 1985, one of Rubin's tenants moved elsewhere and quit paying rent, but didn't want to give up the loft. When Rubin went for an eviction, the tenant told the housing court that he hadn't been getting any heat. Rubin said the tenant had agreed to provide his own heat. The tenant admitted this was true—he had operated his own kerosene heater. The judge asked the tenant what time he usually turned it on. The tenant said around eight a.m. The judge told Rubin the law demanded the heat be turned on at six a.m. Since the tenant hadn't turned on the heater until eight a.m., Rubin was violating the housing law. Rubin lost \$4,000 in back rent and was forced to pay the tenant \$10,000 to give up the loft. She decided to sell the building.

She bought another one in Harlem. The building had 402 housing violations and twenty virtually identical apartments that—due to the patchwork of regulations—rented anywhere from

\$76 to \$450 a month. Borrowing \$100,000, Rubin installed new sewers, heating, plumbing, and sidewalks, and reduced the number of violations to 189.

Her main problem was a tenant who lived on the second floor, directly above her office. The man was a drug addict on welfare and never paid rent. He lived with two large vicious dogs. When Rubin asked for the rent, he slashed her tires. When she went to court, he threatened to kill her.

Finally, after two years in housing court, Rubin succeeded in getting an eviction. The day after the court notice

came through, the tenant firebombed her office, nearly burning down the building.

Rubin filed a complaint in criminal court for attempted murder. The criminal court judge looked at the case and said, "This isn't really a criminal case, it's a housing case." He sent it back to housing court.

The housing court judge looked the case over and decided to overturn the eviction. For firebombing her office, the tenant got to keep the apartment. Charges against him were eventually dropped. He is still living in the building.

Rubin says she is considering going back to China. "The government has offered me the chance to take back my family's old hotel," she said. "I may do it."

"In China, when they want to take your property, they just kill you and get it over with," she said. "Here they torture you. I think I prefer it the old way."

Joel Steinberg, a 46-year-old disbarred criminal lawyer, is currently on trial for beating to death his adopted daughter, Lisa. Long addicted to cocaine, Steinberg also battered his common-law wife, Hedda Nussbaum, over a period of years. The case has received national attention and made the cover of Newsweek.

What has been less noted is that Steinberg was also another freeloading New York tenant. He had not paid rent in four years.

Steinberg and Nussbaum shared a one-bedroom, rent-regulated apartment in a landmark Greenwich Village building that was once the home of Mark Twain. On the market, the apartment is probably worth about \$1,200. Paying \$475 a month, Steinberg and Nussbaum were \$24,000 in arrears.

Steinberg's landlords were Jaroslaw Leshko and his wife, both elderly Rumanian immigrants who bought the building fifteen years ago. Their lawyer, Mark Fresco, says that Steinberg was the shiftiest tenant he ever encountered. "He never actually said he wasn't going to pay the rent," said Fresco. "He'd just say, 'Oh, you hit me at a bad time,' or, 'I'll meet you around the corner in ten minutes.' Then he'd never show up."

So why didn't the landlord bring eviction proceedings? The answer—to anyone familiar with New York housing—is obvious. "We were afraid of what he might do with the other tenants," said Mrs. Leshko.

As a lawyer and a psychopath, Steinberg, of course, would have been the perfect tenant organizer. Faced with an ultimatum about back rent, he probably would have called in the building inspectors, had the building blanketed with code violations, and started a rent strike. "Instead of one tenant we would have been fighting a whole building," said Mrs. Leshko. It was best to let sleeping dogs lie.

Nonetheless, once Lisa Steinberg's beating made the papers, alert apartment hunters saw an opportunity. "We



were besieged with phone calls," said Fresco. "It was ghoulish. The little girl hadn't even died—she was still in a coma—and we had dozens of calls from people asking if the apartment was going to be available."

• • •

The Operator

Eleanor Vail was a real-estate dealer for two years before she decided to become a landlord. "I looked at the people who were buying buildings and said, 'If they can do it, why can't I?'" She knew that small landlords have difficulty in New York, but—like so many others—tended to think it was their own fault.

"I decided I would prove to my tenants I was different," she said. "I would provide them services, make repairs, show them I care about the building."

In 1985, she bought a problem-plagued, five-story building on the Lower East Side. "The morning I closed the sale I went down to the fuel-oil company, plunked down a \$1,000 deposit, and said, 'Start pumping oil at 273 East 3rd.'"

An hour later she got a phone call. The oil truck had been waylaid by a committee of tenants who were refusing to allow any oil deliveries to be made. They had already decided to go on a rent strike. If Vail had any further questions, she was to consult Ann Winestone, the tenant leader on the fifth floor.

Vail soon met Winestone. "She marched into my office and announced the tenants were 'taking the building.' There was nothing I could do about it. In a sense, she was very apologetic. She said she had nothing against me, just 'big landlords.' I told her I only had one building and hadn't owned it for more than a week. She said it didn't matter. 'It's too late,' she said. 'The die is cast.'"

Winestone turned out to be one of those college-educated, freelance radicals who roam the streets of New York administering justice. A Barnard graduate, she paid \$250 a month in rent while working as a short-order cook. Meanwhile, she and several other tenants had learned of the city government's "tenant interim leasing" program, which allows tenants to drive off their landlord and convert the building to a nonprofit cooperative, in which tenants can buy their apartments for \$250.

The tenants followed all the usual procedures. They called the building department and soon the inspectors were combing every nook and cranny, hunting for violations. Meanwhile, "rent strike" signs popped up in every other window. The inspectors found one "rent-impairing" violation—a

cracked support beam in the basement. Vail replaced all twelve basement beams and added a new roof, for \$20,000. The tenants went to housing court, charging she had altered the structure of the building without a permit. No one paid rent. Over the first year, on a \$96,000 rent roll, Vail collected \$2,600.

In the midst of the strike, I called Winestone to get her side of the story.

"What kind of story are you writing?" she demanded.

"Well, I'm just trying to do an objective story about why New York housing is so crazy."

When "Preppie Murderer" Robert Chambers was charged with killing Jennifer Levin, his mother raised the legal fees by doing what everybody else in New York does when they need money—she stopped paying rent.

"Well, I don't think I have time to politically educate you," she fairly spit at me over the phone. "I'm not interested in the kind of objective, journalistic story you're doing. We're fighting for our lives down here."

"Your life is personally endangered?"

"We just had a baby taken to the hospital after being infected from a leaking sewer line. Her life is in danger."

I asked Vail about it later. It was true, she said. A family living illegally in a store on the first floor was feuding with a second-floor welfare family with ten children. "The second-floor kids have broken the toilet several times and are deliberately flooding the downstairs," she said. "I've replaced the toilet twice and tried to evict everyone, but it's hopeless. You can't evict anyone in New York City."

Six months later, the tenants' peti-

tion for taking over the building came before the housing court. Incredibly, the judge turned it down. The tenants were told to pay their back rent. Winestone left the courtroom in tears.

As always in such rent strikes, no one had any intention of paying the back rent. (Brent Musburger, the CBS television sports commentator, once skipped owing \$7,000 after a rent strike.) Winestone and two other tenant leaders—both educated, middle-class people who sold jewelry on the sidewalks—vanished.

Suddenly Vail had three vacancies. "I can't believe it," she said. "Now I can

fix up all three apartments and rent them for \$1,500 a month. Every landlord on the street is asking me, 'How did you do it?' No one's ever heard of a landlord getting three vacancies before. Suddenly I'm a big operator."

• • •

In July 1987, Mrs. Ann Gross Taylor, 56, of New York City, was arrested in Colorado for allegedly kidnapping her estranged 78-year-old husband, John Max Taylor, from his new home in Provo, Utah. With the help of five hired accomplices, Mrs. Taylor forced her husband, a victim of Parkinson's disease, into her car and drove around for two days before being apprehended.

Mrs. Taylor later told the Salt Lake Tribune that she had planned to take her husband back to their \$530-a-month rent-controlled apartment on Central Park West. The building was being converted to a co-op and her husband was the lease-holder. If he did not spend "a certain amount of time" on the premises, Mrs. Taylor said, she would be forced to give up the apartment.

• • •

"Fiddling While the Building Burns"

Gregory Gelman emigrated from the Soviet Union in 1978. An aspiring violinist, he graduated from the Juilliard School of Music and toured the United States and Canada with chamber ensembles. A Carnegie Hall recital was reviewed in the *New York Times*.

He also bought a building in Man-

hattan's Chelsea district. Most of the apartments were rent-controlled. A familiar pattern ensued. When Gelman tried to raise rents, tenants called in the housing inspectors, had violations placed on the building, and stopped paying rent altogether. Gelman found himself facing crippling financial losses.

On February 24, 1986, two men in Gelman's hire poured forty gallons of gasoline over the basement and tried to burn down the building. The gasoline exploded and the two men were severely burned. A two-alarm fire resulted. Seven families were temporarily routed, although no one was injured.

Last April, Gelman was convicted of first-degree arson. The district attorney argued the crime had been particularly heinous because Gelman had been "trying to get the building out of rent regulations."

At his sentencing, Gelman objected, saying he was "a quiet man" who had been victimized by "tenants who did not pay rent for two years."

"Tenants can lie, but landlords must tell the truth," he said. "You can never win being a landlord in New York City."

Judge Jeffrey Atlas was so offended by Gelman's "refus[al] to accept responsibility" for his acts that he sentenced Gelman to the maximum—fifteen-years-to-life, with no possibility of parole for fifteen years. Gelman left the courtroom, sobbing, "My two-year-old daughter will grow up a stranger to me."

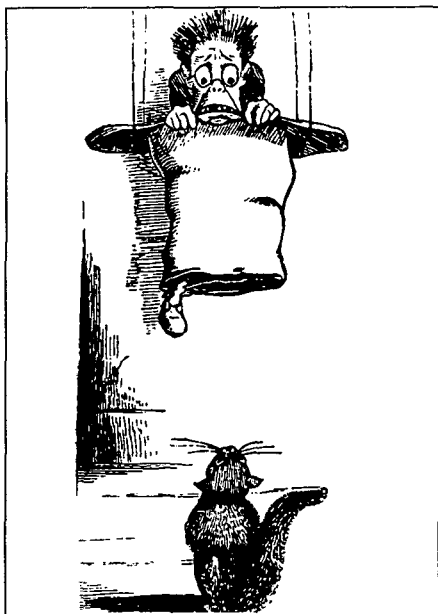
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A few years ago, the New York Daily News printed the following letter from a woman named Karen Wilson:

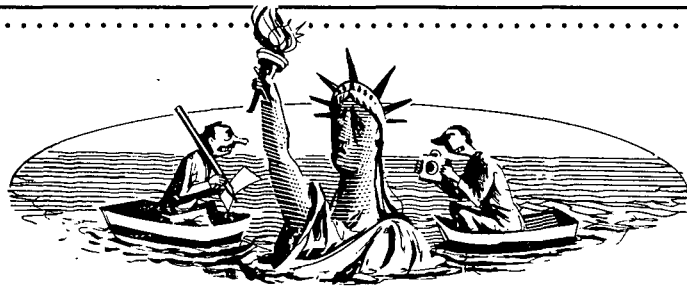
I recently moved to New York from Texas and I pay \$1,000 a month for a nice little apartment on the Lower East Side. The landlords have been reasonable, and the building is clean. Still, when I found out at a tenants' meeting that 30 of the building's 34 apartments rent below \$200 and that most of the tenants in those cheap apartments make more money than I do, I was a bit outraged. I understand protecting the old people, but protecting fellow yuppies with bargains?

In Texas, \$300 will pay rent on a two-bedroom apartment with air conditioning, washer/dryer, swimming pool, fireplace, and garage. The vacancy rate is over 20 percent [actually 18 percent]. There are no rent controls, and tenants hold all the cards. And landlords are not a hated breed. If New Yorkers are so smart, why can't they see that what exists now is more than unfair? It's stupid.

Within a few weeks, several reader responses were printed. All of them said essentially the same thing: "Why don't you go back to Texas!" □



PRESSWATCH



WELCOME TO THE MAJOR LEAKS

by Terry Eastland

“Leaks are fascinating things,” opined the *Wall Street Journal* on November 18. Indeed they are, and since George Bush’s victory on November 8, it has been impossible to follow the news about his transition without understanding the nature and purpose of the leaks producing much of it.

I’m talking about those stories based on “informed sources” or sources that spoke “on condition that they not be identified.” These are “leaked” stories. They’re not the same kind of leaked story as occurs when someone drops, say, an internal memo in a reporter’s lap. That kind of leak happens infrequently. Far more common is this “informed sources” kind. It’s a product, first, of the reporters’ intense interest in who is going to be named to which position, and second, of the informed sources’ intense interest in currying favor with the media and advancing agendas that may or may not be the same as the principal’s, here George Bush’s. Leading questions are asked, suggestive answers are given, and—voilà!—a major story appears.

The key players in this collaborative game are the anonymous sources. Most, in this case, are “Bush aides,” another camouflage. They understand that who gets which job will have an impact on Bush Administration policy. Leaking has political consequences.

With this in mind, consider who’s been most leaked *against*. As I write, the hands-down winners are John Sununu and John Tower. Bush appointed Sununu as his chief of staff and Tower as his secretary of defense. Both are more conservative than Bush’s other choices, who have endured few, if any, negative leaks. The leaking from the Bush transition ship thus washes

against conservative personnel choices, and you can expect leaking during the Bush Administration to wash against conservative policies.

Sununu and Tower supporters point to James Baker, perhaps working through surrogates, as the ultimate source of the leaks against their men. The best leakology (the study of leaks) that I can practice suggests they may be right (although in Tower’s case, his former wife seems to be behind the domestic stuff). Baker didn’t want a single chief of staff for Bush but a troika, as in the one he formed for Reagan with Michael Deaver and Edwin Meese III. As secretary of state, he has incentive to have someone of lesser political stature than Tower working the related field of defense. Reporters find Baker accessible and likable. He is rarely a victim of leaks. That suggests many Bush aides are Baker allies (if not Baker aides). Criticism of Baker in the media typically comes not from anonymous sorts but from opinion writers. And that happens rarely. (Two recent pieces of note are Fred Barnes’s “Mr. Schmooze,” *New Republic*, October 17, and Mark Shields’s “The Teflon Campaign Manager,” *Washington Post*, November 15.)

Don’t think, however, that those leaked against don’t know how to leak. Tower has been around the block

before, and the anonymous defenses of him in media accounts surely had his blessing. And Sununu, who was criticized by “informed sources” as insufficiently schooled in Washington ways, may well have leaked the story of his own appointment. *Time* noted in its December 5 issue that Sununu may have tipped off reporters, thus denying Bush the chance to change his mind. And the day before Sununu’s appointment was formally announced, he gave an interview to the *Wall Street Journal* in which he sounded for all the world like the guy who had been selected. “A request [to serve] isn’t a formal request until the tall, thin guy sings,” he told the *Journal*. “And the tall thin guy hasn’t sung *publicly*.” I put the key word in italics.

As of mid-December, the number of people Bush has been able to appoint before reading about his selections in print is low. “Bush aides” have done most of the talking for Bush. (“Transition sources”—ah, more anonymity—told the *Washington Post* that the leaking has made him go “bananas,” which Bush later denied.) On November 17, the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page, whose staff has some pretty good leakologists, decried the transition leaks, commenting that they foreclose options, sap an administration’s morale, and undercut presidential de-

cisions. The *Journal* noted that Bush seems to understand this because he required aides to sign a “standards of conflict.” The *Journal* then quoted what it called “the leakers’ provision”: “I will hold in confidence any non-public information provided to me in the course of my duties with the transition and ensure that such information is used exclusively for purposes of the transition.” But at least as originally drafted, that wasn’t any leakers’ provision. It was a promise not to capitalize personally on nonpublic information. As far as I can tell, Bush aides have kept that promise. Meanwhile, the leaking gurgles along.

A footnote: the implication of the *Journal*’s editorial is that leaks can and should be prevented. These are worthy questions, reserved for another day.

• • •

On November 21, the *Washington Post* reported (on the basis of “informed sources,” of course) that Bush planned to announce that day his decision to retain Richard Thornburgh as attorney general. This appointment, the *Post* told readers in the story’s second sentence, “was unexpected.” The next day the *Post*, reporting the announcement, wrote: “As expected, Bush said yesterday that . . . Thornburgh . . . will remain in [his post].”

Unexpected, expected . . . what gives here? The *Post* characterized the appointment as “unexpected” on November 21 because the day after the election it had reported, out of Houston, that Bush advisers (anonymously, of course) were saying that Bush was considering other folks for Thornburgh’s job. And the *Post* could say on November 22 that what Bush did was “expected” because on November 21 it had reported that the “unexpected” would come to pass.

Newspapers can be as mindful of the precedents they establish as courts of law, and they can discard them just as quickly!



Terry Eastland, The American Spectator’s new Presswatch columnist, worked for newspapers in North Carolina, California, and Virginia before serving as director of public affairs in the Justice Department in 1985-1988. He is currently resident scholar at the National Legal Center for the Public Interest.

On November 4, on the *Post's* Federal Page, Judith Havemann wrote a story about a draft report by the General Accounting Office (GAO) critical of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). The document said that OPM, which replaced the old Civil Service Commission in 1978, hasn't done the job. According to GAO, the morale of federal workers has declined since 1978, as have stan-

dards, oversight, training, and recruitment.

You can debate who's right so far as the merits go: GAO or OPM, which sharply disagrees with the accounting office's critique. But what's at least equally interesting is the story behind the story.

In late 1987, GAO, which is an agent of Congress but is supposed to be politically neutral, decided, on its own

initiative, to conduct a management review of OPM, which is part of the executive branch. Back in the spring it briefed OPM officials on its preliminary findings, which were decidedly negative. OPM told GAO it was way off base, but on October 21, when officials from the two agencies met again to discuss what was now in draft form, it was clear that GAO hadn't changed its views. OPM, which that day saw the

draft for the first time, was told that GAO had done the review in order to "influence the transition," and that GAO would release the draft report to congressional staff, this being, as one GAO official put it, "standard operating procedure," even though no one from the Hill had asked GAO to conduct such a review. On October 28, a GAO official placed a "heads-up" call to a senior OPM official to advise that indeed the draft was now up on the Hill. Within an hour of that call, OPM Director Constance Horner sent a letter to Comptroller General Charles A. Bowsher, who heads the GAO, expressing her disappointment over the release of the draft report to congressional staff. She wrote that such action "reflects an obvious politicization of what is supposed to be a nonpartisan study."

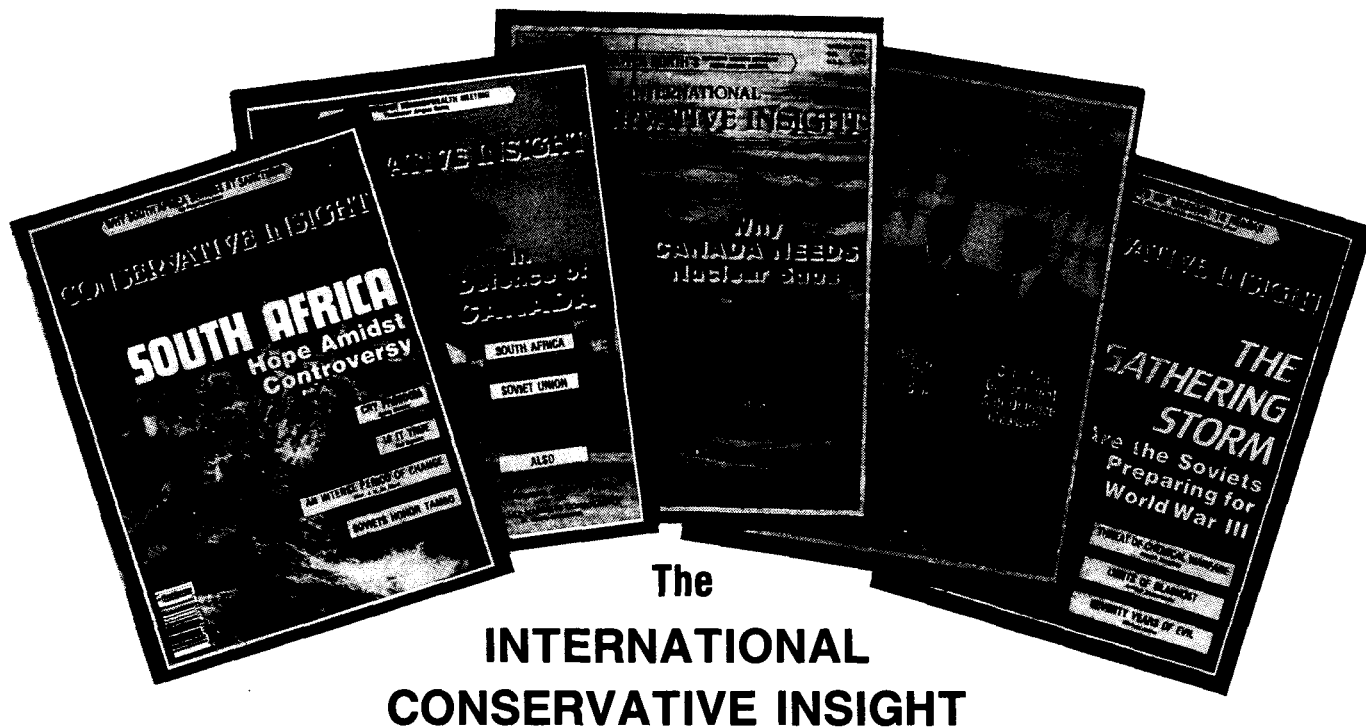
Horner expected the draft to leak (this is the less frequent kind of leak), and sure enough it did. A preliminary scoring of this leak seemed to be Tinkers to Evers to Chance: GAO to the Hill to the *Post*. On the eve of publication, as Horner aides fielded *Post* calls to get OPM's "side" of the story, she fired off another letter to Bowsher, blasting GAO for its handling of the report.

Who leaked the draft report? Hard to say. I called a plausible suspect, Andy Feinstein, Pat Schroeder's chief aide on civil service matters. "I tried to leak it, but someone beat me to it," he says, noting that he had called Havemann to tell her about it but got "the distinct impression she already had a copy." Perhaps the leak didn't come from the Hill, but from GAO; if so, score it without the middleman, simply GAO to the *Post*.

Actually, it doesn't much matter whether the leak came from Hill staffers or GAO officials. Both had the same intentions. Beat-to-the-leak Feinstein called the *Post* because he, too, wanted to influence the transition. "I wanted to focus the Bush people on the problems at OPM," he says.

Why was the draft report leaked to the *Post*? Probably because, as Feinstein told me, the *Post's* Havemann is about the only reporter who shows "much interest" in this kind of issue. Havemann duly reported Horner's letters to Bowsher and comments of various third parties. But behind the story, maybe even the real story, is that of how a supposedly nonpolitical agency, the GAO, works toward the same political end as congressional staff, using the *Post's* Federal Page as a sort of billboard to be read by the new administration. Here is an instance of the strong impulse in today's Washington towards congressional government (a woefully underreported phenomenon). By that I mean the tendency of the

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Congress to subordinate its historic role as legislator to that of overseer of the executive branch. In this capacity, Congress tries to administer the executive branch, a task that of course entails "influencing the transition."

• • •

On November 10, the *Post's* Style section published something called "Quayle Watch." The anonymous, boxed offering consisted of (1) a photo showing the Quayles at Andrews AFB, with their hands cupped over their ears, presumably because of the noise from Air Force Two, George Bush's plane; and (2) three short paragraphs on Quayle's November 9

activities, the idea being to keep watch on this particular, well, bird. Quayle was referred to as, in that rotund manner that demeans, "J. Danforth Quayle." This man, Style told readers, had eaten "pancakes for breakfast on his first day as the man soon to be a mere brain wave away from leadership of the Free World." More text of this kind followed. On November 11 and 12, the Style section continued the lampoon. Then, without explanation, it disappeared. What happened?

Style editor Mary Hadar said "Quayle Watch" was "temporarily suspended" after a meeting she had with managing editor Leonard Downie. "Quayle Watch" drew some newsroom critics who thought that the feature

trivialized the office of Vice President, that it was unfair to Quayle, and that, in any event, it couldn't be sustained on an everyday basis.

Hadar defends "Quayle Watch" but says her newsroom colleagues misunderstood it. Yet I think the *Post* writer who described the item to me as "a catty little, smirky little thing" had it about right. That's how I and many other readers took it. "Quayle Watch" should be permanently suspended. Cartoons belong on the editorial page, and surely they ought to be signed.

• • •

Speaking of Quayle, *Time* correspondent David Beckwith is the

Vice President's press secretary. Beckwith didn't know Quayle; he got the job because he knew Bush. Beckwith had covered the White House during the Reagan years and Bush during the campaign. Bush likes Beckwith and considered hiring him as his press secretary but wound up retaining the White House incumbent, Marlin Fitzwater. My guess is that Beckwith is taking infield practice in the Vice President's office (just as Fitzwater once did). And—here's a prediction to do John McLaughlin proud—at some point within the next year or two, upon Fitzwater's retirement, Beckwith will be elevated to the presidential league, to take questions for the left-hander. You saw it here first. □

THE BUSINESS OF AMERICA



SAVE US FROM THE REREGULATORS

by Irwin M. Stelzer

It is suddenly getting difficult to remember that Mike Dukakis lost the election. The press is filled with story after story about the need for expanding the government's role in the economy. We are told that financial markets should be regulated to avoid excessive price volatility; that airline schedules should be regulated to eliminate delays; and that corporate takeovers should be regulated to prevent excessive use of debt. In addition, we hear about a host of new spending programs, all of them urgently required to make up for the so-called neglect of the Reagan years. In short, the President-elect is being Bushwhacked by the media and the Democrats, both having forgotten that the late-confessing liberal candidate lost. Perhaps they are emboldened by the allegedly "pragmatic" team Bush has assembled into believing that the election was, after all, not about ideology.

One would think the economy was in crisis, that some latter-day Franklin Roosevelt was needed to save it, and that increased regulation and spending

were the instruments best suited to the job. But the economy is healthy, if not perfectly so, and indiscriminate regulation is likely to create more problems than it solves.

First, the economy. There is no question that the economy is in generally good shape, and certainly so by comparison with the mess inherited from Jimmy Carter. Real growth is in the 3.3 to 3.5 percent range, unemployment is low, new jobs are being added at an incredible rate, and prices are what passes for stable these days. Indeed, while no trend lasts forever, there are few signs that the record Reagan expansion will soon come to a halt without grievous policy

errors. More important for the long term, business investment is rising smartly, productivity seems to be picking up a bit, and America's unit labor costs now are more or less competitive with those of its trading partners.

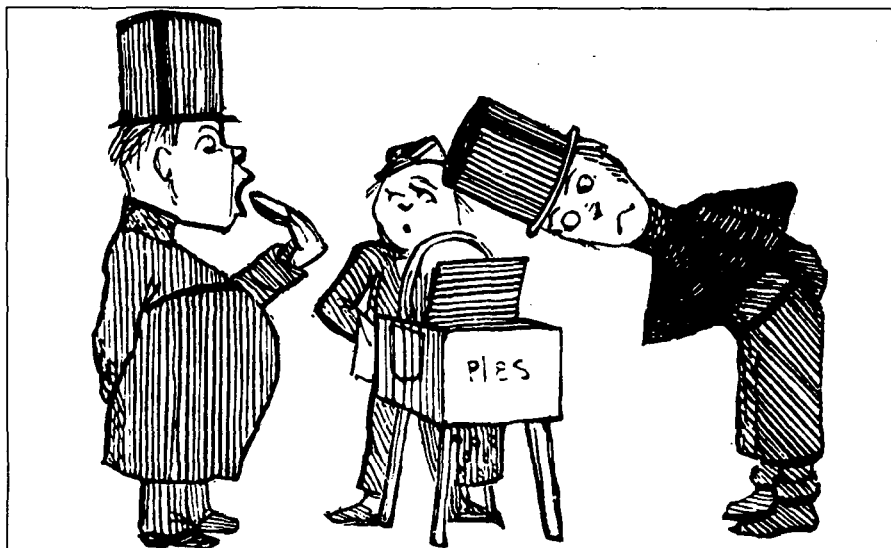
So, press reports to the contrary, Reagan is not bequeathing to his successor an economy in crisis. But neither is he leaving him an economic utopia. Indeed, as the financial markets signaled immediately after the election, Bush will have to attend to America's budget and trade deficits. But policies to reduce both are clearly taking shape, and they need not involve the courses of action being pressed on Bush by an

assortment of congressional leaders (an oxymoron if ever there was one) and media pundits.

The budget deficit, it should be noted, is coming down, perhaps absolutely and certainly in relation to the size of the economy. From between 5 and 6 percent of GNP a few years ago, it has dropped to 3 percent today—about the same as Japan's. Given its initial causes, this is unsurprising. Early in the Reagan years, the government ran large deficits as a consequence of the recession that seemed necessary to wring almost runaway inflation out of the economy. Even Reaganomics' severest critics agree that those deficits were both inevitable and good economic policy.

Then came the defense buildup, a game of catch-up that even the departing Jimmy Carter, chastened by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, agreed had to be played. Because other spending was not cut, deficits soared, even though government revenues continued to grow, despite (some would say because of) the Reagan tax cuts.

This has led to the charge that Reagan has saddled future generations with enormous debts. Harvard's Benjamin Friedman, for example, accuses Reagan of violating "the basic moral



Irwin M. Stelzer is director of the Energy and Environmental Policy Center of the John F. Kennedy School, Harvard University, and an American correspondent for the London Sunday Times.

principle that had bound each generation of Americans to the next," that principle being to leave each generation better off than its predecessor.¹ This is rather like accusing a father of impoverishing his son by leaving him a \$100,000 house because it bears a \$25,000 mortgage. After all, our defense buildup showed the Soviets that we meant to match theirs, and that their economy simply could not sustain such a competition. This produced, to the benefit of future generations, a willingness by the Soviets to agree to reductions in nuclear weapons and perhaps even in conventional forces. (Reserve judgment on this latter point: Gorbachev's unilateral cuts, announced at the U.N. in December, may prove nothing more than a retreat from Afghanistan, a shifting of military construction personnel to civilian payrolls, and an elimination of some obsolete weaponry.)

With the recession having given way to a boom, and the military buildup largely accomplished, the budget deficit can now decline. And it is doing just that. But this is not to say that the deficit can be ignored. Indeed, Bush and the designated chairman of his Council of Economic Advisers have already laid out a broad program to cut the deficit, gradually. That program, known as the "flexible freeze," involves keeping total expenses constant in real terms—if spending on one program goes up, spending on some other must come down. Meanwhile, a growing economy will throw off increasing tax revenues. With expenditures constant and revenues up, the deficit falls. The "flexible freeze" plan has been greeted with derision—no less an expert than Gary Hart told an assemblage of London financiers, at a *Sunday Times* forum, that it wouldn't work. But if the economy continues to grow at its present pace, and if real spending can be contained—a big "if"—Bush should be able to bring the deficit down to close to zero by the mid-1990s—without across-the-board tax increases.

Evidence suggests, then, that a deficit-reducing deal is quite within Bush's grasp. There is also good reason to be similarly sanguine about the nation's trade deficit. The deficit is falling, as the growth in exports outstrips growth in imports. By the end of 1988 the current account deficit, the broadest measure of trade performance, was at its lowest level in three years. And it is likely to continue falling, so long as Bush's team resists importunings to attempt to shore up the dollar. Martin Feldstein has got it pretty much right: continued merchandise trade deficits, augmented by an outflow of dollars to pay dividends

and interest on the investments foreigners have made in the U.S., will increase the supply of dollars we want foreigners to buy. To get them to take those dollars, we must lower the price.

This will not be a costless exercise. Knowing they are buying a currency that will be worth less to them in a few years, foreigners will demand higher returns on their investments. This will keep interest rates up, reducing the level of economic activity a bit. But the most common fear—that somewhere along the path to lower trade and budget deficits the rest of the world will simply stop buying dollars, creating financial panic and a recession—seems a bit overblown. The Cato Institute's William Niskanen, who served on Reagan's Council of Economic Advisers, recently told a meeting sponsored by his institute and the Institute of Economic Affairs (a London think tank), "There is no cliff out there." So long as the U.S. maintains a strong investment climate and secure property rights, and imposes no restrictions on the repatriation of profits, foreigners will want dollar assets. And they will not demand a significant premium for holding them, according to Niskanen.

So Bush need not be panicked into abandoning the larger aspects of Reaganomics. It is in the less closely watched and less clearly understood world of the microeconomy—the markets in which prices are set, business decisions made—that we may soon be saying, "Reaganomics, RIP." Reports out of Washington are ominous. The *New York Times* quotes New York Democratic Senator Pat Moynihan as saying, "There is not the enthusiasm for deregulation that there once was." His Republican colleague, Alfonse D'Amato, agrees: "I don't see deregulation as a driving force anymore." There is, according to the *Times*—not previously known for its close affinity to coach-class air travelers—

an "outcry for renewed regulations."

If that is true, conservatives have themselves to blame. For they never distinguished clearly between the economic regulation they should oppose and the social regulation they should favor. Those who pushed to get the government out of the business of setting fares and determining which airline might fly where never suggested that the regulation of safety be abandoned. Yet conservatives never noticed that distinction, and began to wrap the "deregulation" banner around schemes to reduce regulation of environmental degradation and workplace safety.

Had they abandoned rhetoric about "getting government off the backs of the people" and instead submitted such regulations to the hard test of whether their benefits exceeded their costs, they would have avoided the present backlash. Bush will have to be more precise and distinguish between regulations that impede the functioning of markets and regulations that improve it. Refusal to allow a truck that carried a load from Chicago to Detroit to backhaul a load of goods in the opposite direction is economic regulation of the most wasteful sort. So is mandating prices above those that would prevail if Adam Smith's invisible hand were permitted to replace the long arm of government. But regulations that require polluters to curb costly emissions, using the most efficient pollution abatement techniques, are something else again. Such regulations, if drawn so as to ensure that the benefits in improved health exceed the costs of implementation, make markets work better. After all, the user of the offending product will then face a price that fully reflects the cost of the resource he consumes—the cost of the clean air as well as the coal, of the clean water as well as the chemical raw materials.

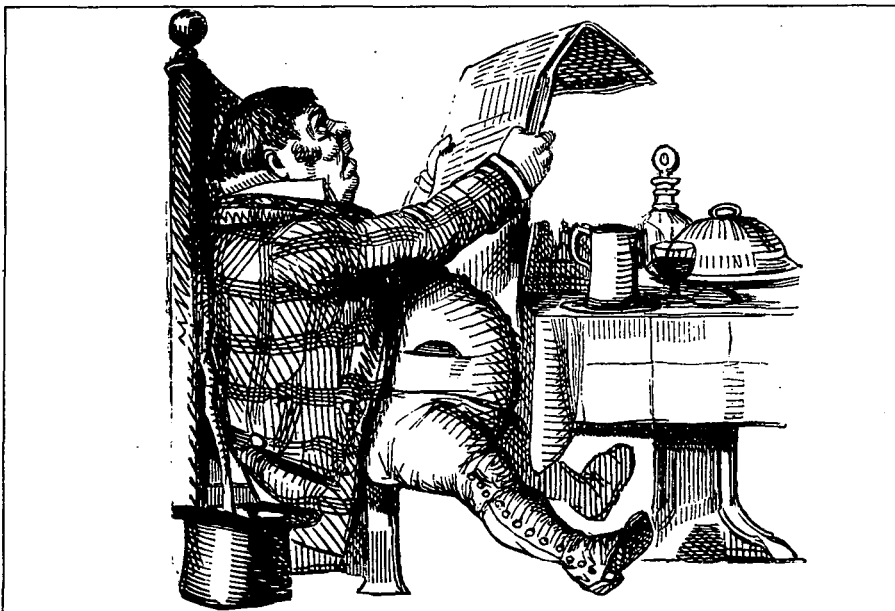
Unfortunately, many liberals and conservatives find such policies unacceptable. To liberals, human life and environmental quality are "priceless."

No cost is too high to avoid a death or prevent a very brief period of smog. To some conservatives, every regulation is anathema, another instance of the government riding the backs of the people and stifling business initiative.

Unless Bush can understand the distinction between wise and unwise regulation, he will be faced with making a series of unprincipled compromises with those who want to reregulate prices and those who quite sensibly want to regulate antisocial economic behavior. And his new team of Bushmen will be glad to help him down that path. Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady is already on record as favoring closing down securities markets if demand and supply produce unacceptable (to whom?) volatility. In order to protect investors, in other words, he would at times make it impossible for them to sell their assets, thereby temporarily reducing the value of those assets to zero. Secretary of State Baker has already demonstrated a willingness to meddle in currency markets if he doesn't approve of the ongoing auction for dollars. For these men, pragmatism is all. That's a great relief to the liberal press, but a danger signal for those who hope Bush will continue sensible deregulation.

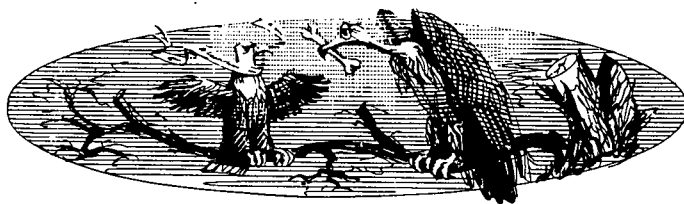
Indeed, one hopes that Bush will adopt a much-derided, but highly effective Reagan policy: "Don't just do something, stand there!" For a good part of the Reagan success story consists of what his administration didn't do. It did *not* attempt to prevent the restructuring of American industry by so-called predators, *arrivistes* who took over companies, dismissed sleepy managements, and took apart conglomerates, the separate parts of which were worth more than the whole. It did *not* attempt to interfere with the development of new debt instruments, instruments that enabled new entrepreneurs to substitute cheaper debt for more expensive equity to break the commercial banks' stranglehold on access to credit and to restore the long-broken link between the ownership and management of American businesses. And it did *not* accept many of the recommendations, made by panic-stricken commentators on the October stock market "crash," that it attempt to reduce "excessive volatility."

Personally, I have little hope that Bush will draw these fine lines and stand firm against the reregulators. True believers in markets are likely to be converted from a vanguard into a rearguard. And, in all likelihood, a petulant one. But Bush has surprised us all before—most recently with a skillful campaign for the presidency. Let's hope he does it again. □



¹See Friedman's *Day of Reckoning*, Random House, \$19.95.

THE NATION'S PULSE



THE BEST TV DOCUMENTARY OF 1988

by Terry Teachout

The authors of the endless paeans to John F. Kennedy appearing in the elite media last November were hampered considerably by the fact that the object of their affections is now thought by reputable historians to have spent most of his waking hours screwing obliging women and forging his name to the collected works of Ted Sorensen. Even Pete Hamill, whose will to believe was long unrivaled among liberal journalists, admitted in his hard-breathing tribute to "JFK: The Real Thing" that the ultimate legacy of his boyhood idol consisted of "some of the greatest political speeches I've ever heard." A lot of hot air, in other words.

But this tinny note of disillusion was omitted from the various television specials devoted to the life and death of John Kennedy. It figures. Kennedy's one lasting accomplishment, after all, was to have taught a generation of hungry politicians that it is better to look good than to be good. It is altogether appropriate that this uniquely tawdry achievement should have been so extensively celebrated by TV on the twenty-fifth anniversary of Kennedy's assassination.

Most of the Kennedy TV specials were understandably content-free, consisting chiefly of film clips of the young hero accompanied by canned music and fruity voiceovers. The funeral ceremonies, the Kennedy Administration's final (and, of course, fitting) triumph of show over substance, dominated most of the broadcasts devoted to the assassination. Fortunately, cable TV provided one exception to the flood tide of oleaginous banality: Arts & Entertainment's "JFK Assassination: As It Happened," the best of the Kennedy tributes and, for my money, the best TV documentary of 1988.

The way broadcast news usually revisits a great historical event was

demonstrated to perfection by CBS's two-hour compilation of carefully edited highlights of that network's coverage of the assassination and its aftermath. "As It Happened," by contrast, consisted solely of an unedited videotape of the first six hours of NBC's live coverage on November 22, 1963. Nothing else. No after-the-fact commentary. No frame-by-frame rehashing of the Zapruder film. No tacky commercials. (The CBS special was followed by a house ad for "Murder, She Wrote.") Just the thing itself, endless and numbing and, in the end, spellbinding. CBS's neat and tidy retrospective, with Dan Rather on hand to grease the skids and make the rough places plain, seemed hopelessly sterile by comparison.

Like all good dramas, "As It Happened" begins *in medias res*, about forty-five seconds after NBC broke into its local programming in New York at 1:45 p.m. with word of the shooting in Dallas. The first thing you see is three men sitting at a plain wooden table in NBC's cheaply decorated "flash" studio: Chet Huntley, who co-anchored "The Huntley-Brinkley Report," the nation's most popular network newscast in 1963; Frank McGee, one of the network's top correspondents during the sixties; and Bill Ryan, an NBC radio reporter who happened to be in the studio when the bulletins came in. Since Ryan was the only other person in sight who knew which end of a microphone to talk into, he was hastily pressed into service. (Try and imagine *that* happening today.)

Off camera, the situation in New York was, as Ryan later told viewers, one of "controlled panic." Small wonder. The conditions under which TV news operated in 1963 were unbelievably primitive. The age of minicams and satellites was a decade away. The first half-hour evening news programs on CBS and NBC had been broadcast only a few weeks before. Live "stand-uppers" were invariably shot from

fixed, prearranged points. Most on-the-scene coverage was filmed rather than videotaped, which meant that it had to be developed before it could be shown on the air. To top it all off, the entire NBC network was "down" at 1:30 p.m. on November 22, meaning that no programs were going out to NBC's local affiliates around the country. As a result, it took nearly an hour for David Brinkley to scuttle local programming in Washington, D.C. and plug into the network.

On camera, Huntley, McGee, and Ryan, trying with mixed success to remain calm, tell the viewers everything they know, which consists of a steady stream of bulletins ripped directly from the AP and UPI wires. There are no live pictures from the scene of the shooting. Indeed, almost an hour passes before there are any live pictures from anywhere other than TV studios in New York and Dallas. Though

NBC's Robert MacNeil had been riding in the Kennedy motorcade, he was unaccompanied by a cameraman. We first hear from MacNeil when he manages to commandeer a telephone at Parkland Memorial Hospital and call New York. (When MacNeil first abandoned the motorcade and ran into the Texas School Book Depository, Lee Harvey Oswald obligingly steered him to the nearest telephone.) The control room in New York is unable to put his voice on the air, and Frank McGee, after fiddling helplessly with a mysterious-looking black box, is forced to repeat MacNeil's end of the conversation, sentence by sentence, for the benefit of the folks at home.

At length, MacNeil passes along the official announcement of Kennedy's death. Chet Huntley, visibly stunned, quickly vanishes from the flash studio to pull himself together and prepare for the evening wrap-up. Various Washing-

How many undeserved radar tickets were issued last year?

a) 1,012,317 b) 649,119 c) 0 d) No one knows

Unfortunately, the answer is d) No one knows. Over ten million tickets were issued last year. Some experts say up to thirty percent of them were incorrect.

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You may find this hard to believe, but traffic radar doesn't tell the operator which vehicle he is clocking. The radar unit displays one number. That's all. It might be the closest car, it might be the fastest car, it might be the biggest car. Or it might not. The operator has to decide.

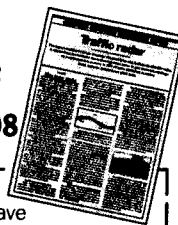
And since radar operators are human, they don't always guess right. Even if only one percent of the tickets issued last year were wrong, that's *one hundred thousand undeserved tickets*.

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**CINCINNATI
MICROWAVE**

Terry Teachout is a member of the editorial board of the New York Daily News. He is the editor of Ghosts on the Roof: Selected Journalism of Whitaker Chambers, 1931-1959, forthcoming from Regnery Gateway.

ton correspondents are hustled in front of the camera and told to say something. Silent film from Dallas is thrown on the air unscreened, still wet from the developing process. (In one clip, we see a young Texan standing outside Parkland Memorial Hospital holding a sign that reads "Yankee, Go Home.") Dwight Eisenhower, in New York to give a speech, offers a few scrambled, calming platitudes. Irving R. Levine, NBC's man in Rome, checks in with a fuzzy-sounding transatlantic telephone call. A man-in-the-street interview is conducted outside Rockefeller Center. One of the interviewees is black, an unexpected sight in 1963. The interviewees unanimously blame the assassination on right-wing cranks.

As word of the arrest of Lee Harvey Oswald is broadcast, you suddenly and forcibly realize that the conspiracy theories with which you grew up are absurd, that the assassin was captured within two hours of the shooting and that nobody in his right mind doubted at the time that he was the assassin.

The paranoiacs would come crawling out of the woodwork on Sunday, when Jack Ruby shot Oswald before a live TV audience. Meanwhile, Oswald's Marxist past and his membership in a group called "Fair Play for Cuba" are reported, and you breathe, together with Bill Ryan and Frank McGee and the rest of the country, a sigh of relief: *Thank God he was a Commie. We can deal with that.*

At 6:05 p.m., Air Force One arrives at Andrews Air Force Base in Washington, and NBC is finally able to do the thing it does best: show live pictures. The bronze coffin bearing Kennedy's corpse is manhandled into a waiting hearse. Jacqueline Kennedy, her stockings caked with blood, walks behind it. Lyndon Johnson marches before the waiting cameras, reads a terse statement and is whisked away into a helicopter. At the end of the broadcast, Chet Huntley and David Brinkley materialize in their respective studios, their voices firmly under control, ready at last to put their

stamp on the terrible events of the day.

"JFK Assassination: As It Happened" is a rare opportunity to see what TV news looked like in its awkward age. Despite its length, it leaves you eager for more. To be sure, NBC's coverage of the assassination was crude—at times astonishingly so. But it was also, in a strange way, innocent. None of the on-screen faces are especially pretty. Chet Huntley's grim features could have been carved out of a tree stump, and Bill Ryan, the radio man, looks like he just drove up from Grover's Corners for a day in the big city. No microphones are shoved into the unwilling faces of victims. No one says anything particularly fatuous or overbearing. Something awful has happened, and everyone wants to be as dignified about it as possible. One recalls the televised chaos that enveloped the shooting of Ronald Reagan

and marvels at this sober spectacle.

The conventional wisdom about the assassination of John F. Kennedy was that it was the making of TV news. In the wake of that long weekend, the flash studios were scrapped and the bureaus were expanded and the networks began to take themselves seriously as purveyors of news. You know the rest. Perhaps TV learned the uses and abuses of glamour from Kennedy himself. It certainly paid generous tribute to his telegenic charm on the anniversary of his death. PBS even went so far as to broadcast a program consisting entirely of footage from Kennedy's press conferences, those shameless exercises in media manipulation that made Ronald Reagan's infinitely less polished attempts at schmoozing the press look like outtakes from "The Gong Show." Arts & Entertainment deserves high praise for having chosen to ignore the Kennedy myth and show instead the poor but honest face of broadcast news before the fall. □

AMONG THE INTELLECTUALOIDS



ANTICOMMUNISM AND MENTAL HEALTH

by David Evanier and Harvey Klehr

Twelve hundred people came to Boston just days after the November election to see and hear Gus Hall, Angela Davis, Cheddi Jagan, Alexander Cockburn, Philip Agee, Jack O'Dell, and Julian Bond expunge a terrible thing. They came from Sewanee, Tennessee, and Ukiah, California; many seemed to have just crept out of the woodwork.

They came to Harvard for a three-day conference on "Anticommunism and the U.S.: History and Consequences" sponsored by the Institute for Media Analysis. The group is one of a growing number of radical left beehives that are trying to reshape the universe by saying old things in new ways. Its co-founders, William Schaap and Ellen Ray, fresh from the *Covert*

David Evanier is writing a novel about American Communism. Harvey Klehr is the Samuel Candler Dobbs Professor of Politics at Emory University and the author, most recently, of Far Left of Center: The American Radical Left Today (Transaction Books).

Action Information Bulletin, which specializes in exposing American intelligence agents abroad, have turned their creative efforts to finding new ways to give peace a chance. Don Feder, in the *Boston Herald*, likened the happening to "cockroaches gathering to protest DDT."

The *People's Daily World* liked it. It was "unique, remarkable and welcome." There were sponsors like Bella Abzug, Gore Vidal, Bernie Lown, and William Styron. Ben and Jerry donated ice cream. Financial supporters included Sallie Bingham and Abby Rockefeller. The conference was dedicated to Sean McBride, "a giant of a man . . . the only person ever to be awarded both the Nobel Peace Prize and the Lenin Peace Prize," and a onetime chief of staff of the IRA.

The mood was idiotically happy. Blanche Wiesen Cook, a historian, announced that "there are more of us than there are of them." The problem was that "they" were keeping the truth from the American people.

In a message to participants, the In-

stitute for Media Analysis traced the genesis of the Harvard gathering to a "seminal paper" entitled "The Black Hole of Anticommunism" by Joel Kovel, an IMA board member and Alger Hiss Professor of Social Studies at Bard College. The institute "saw the evolution of anticommunism as a pathology which had become the civic religion of the U.S." The IMA spells anti-Communism without a hyphen. This is very important. Opposition to Communism is unrelated to Communism; it is instead a smokescreen for "reaction."

The conference (thirty-eight panels and plenaries) thoroughly covered the dire consequences of anticommunism: it deflowers us, poisons our bodily fluids, kills the poor, makes us fight wars against innocent people, demolishes time, spreads heterosexuality, destroys paid maternity leaves, fosters antilebianism, eradicates abortion rights—well, it just *poisons and ruins* everything. Nobody knows where it comes from, although some have hunches. Alger Hiss Professor Kovel traced the pathology back to unique

American paranoid tendencies as embodied in Melville's *Moby Dick*. Blanche Wiesen Cook explained, "Everything fine and creative in American thought has been splattered and smeared" by anticommunism. She noted "how smarmy we seem before the world."

How many ways is anticommunism bad? Let us count the ways. Jesse Jackson's treasured adviser on foreign policy, Jack O'Dell: "Anticommunism is the ideology of hatred that has been a spin-off of the big lie about the Soviet Union." Kovel: "Anticommunism is always cynical manipulation." At one panel someone from the floor said that any criticism of the Soviet Union or Marxism was "pimping for the bourgeoisie." Cheddi Jagan said that responsibility for sexual harassment in the workplace in Guyana was due to anticommunism. He cited a report that said that "as regards sexual gratification, public officeholders show particular favor to those who submit

to their urge to be sexually gratified." This is what anticommunism does.

"Guyana needs a new moral vitality," Jagan continued, "a fresh flow of values . . . into the lifestream of society." Whence floweth this freshness? "Only [from] the Maurice Bishops, the Salvador Allendes, the Fidel Castros supported by the people." Sean Gervasi of the Institute for Policy Studies generated surprise and delight in the audience by speaking with originality and freshness of "the murderous insanity generated by anticommunism." He noted that "the notion of Soviet expansionism and the desire for world conquest is probably the greatest myth of the twentieth century." Val Moghadam, a "post-doctoral fellow at the Pembroke Center for Teaching and Research on Women at Brown University," in answer to a question, explained the difference between counter-revolutionary mujahedeen (in Afghanistan) and revolutionary mujahedeen (in Iran): the "Islamicists in Iran . . . have fewer problems with women. . . . The mujahedeen in Afghanistan are astonishingly reactionary . . . very unprincipled . . . deal in drugs . . . extraordinarily patriarchal in terms of their approach to women . . . and [it gets worse!] they love Reagan and now Bush."

Throughout the conference, some women made it clear that there were not enough of them on the panels. There were in fact some men still on the panels, and this too seemed almost an element of anticommunist pathology.

The festivities formally began with a message from John Kenneth Galbraith, who had been scheduled to give opening remarks but was unable to attend because of illness. Abby Rockefeller read his letter, in which he said that "I regard this conference as an important step toward reason."

The tone was set at the first evening's symposium on "Choosing the News." Alexander Cockburn offered his nuanced view of why media moguls are anticommunist: "Communism means taking money away from rich people. That is the nitty-gritty." Wilbert Tatum, publisher of the *Amsterdam News*, one of the leading black newspapers in the United States, was nostalgic: "I am saddened . . . because I recall my days at Camp Unity and sitting around the campfire singing 'I dreamed I saw Joe Hill last night, alive as you and me.' " He recited the whole damn thing, then he recited his own editorials.

The only actual Communist on the panel, Gianfranco Corsini, a correspondent for Italian Communist newspapers, praised the diversity of the American press and said the range of opinion available through American

mass media was far superior to that in other countries, including Italy. The next day Cockburn referred to Corsini's remarks as an example of the moral collapse of Italian Communism.

William Styron was outraged. At the war on Nicaragua, at the *New York Times*. He had reservations about the Sandinistas, but "far less [sic] reservations than I do about Ronald Reagan." He labeled James LeMoyne of the

Times a liar and asked, "How do we deal with the press—with a monolithic newspaper like the *New York Times* which demonstrates such incredible schizophrenia?" This will surely be a problem for Styron, who will have to deal with the *Times* to find more scraps and clippings to write another opus like *Sophie's Choice*.

Michael Parenti, a political scientist who recently complained in the *Guar-*

dian that the *Moscow News* was too anticommunist, jumped up and down in the front row for recognition. Breathing heavily, he said, "I am a conspiracy theorist [loud cheers]. . . . The minute you imply that the people who own the newspapers the wealth the land the labor the capital the banks the industry organized to suit their interests you're a conspiracy theorist."

One of Saturday's panels, "Anticom-



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munism and American Intellectual Life," was moderated by Kovel, the Hiss prof. Historian Blanche Wiesen Cook was not happy: "We stand morally isolated before the world, allied with South Africa and other killer countries . . . always bellowing, when we are not shrieking, and thumping and bumping and burping our bombs and tanks and missiles Communist Communist Communist . . . incredible shrinking American heart . . . polluted the discourse . . . debased . . . deformed . . ."

Zoologist Stephen Jay Gould offered up his sunny view of personkind: "Ordinary daily behavior is geniality . . . we step aside for people, we say thank you to the man who sells the newspaper, we smile at a child . . . there are acts of ordinary geniality even on Times Square . . . the species is peaceful . . . the problem is the kind of government we have." There was happy, genial applause.

Kovel said that the coming times would be grim, but "the U.S. is weakening and has less capacity to enforce a megalomaniacal ideology like anticommunism." Anticommunism was a weed, a deep pathology, a generalized dementia. Kovel looked deeply into himself and saw a black hole: "We all have to deal with our own internalized

anticommunism . . . an exploitation of the deep structures of racism for the purpose of managing threats to capitalist rule . . ." How could something so . . . low . . . so smarmy . . . as anticommunism understand something so exalted, so totally unrelated to it, *the exact opposite of it*, as Communism? "Anticommunism is no more capable of understanding the reality of Communism than racism is capable of perceiving the reality of the Afro-American experience. . . . Anticommunism destroys time itself."

And so it went. Multiply this by thirty-eight panels.

But there were flora and fauna, uniquely rich in color, beyond this. Like the young lady who saw "anticommunism as basically a reaction to any kind of horizontality whatsoever." Or Angela Davis, who conceded that "women wait on long lines in the USSR," but quickly added that "they wait on long lines in supermarkets here." Dr. Nathaniel Lehrmann attended many panels, with a comment for almost every question period. He opined that "Jesse Jackson is the best Jew in America." A life fellow of the American Psychiatric Association, he handed out his broadside,

"Anti-communism: Conspiracy and Terrorism, Psychiatry and AIDS" (hyphen in the original). His musings suggested that, as the Soviet Union itself has hinted, AIDS is yet another example of capitalism's dirty tricks. "What is being hidden behind the new billion dollar HIV industry?" he said.

When asked what the perfect daily newspaper would look like, Alexander Cockburn replied that "an expanded version of the *Nation* magazine would be ideal." Esther Kingston-Mann, a professor of Russian history at the University of Massachusetts in Boston, won the Walter Duranty prize for Soviet reporting; she complained that too many Sovietologists and journalists think that the only things that matter in the Soviet Union are human rights and politics. Simply not true! One of the best kept secrets of today's world is the social achievements of the USSR. Their social welfare guarantees! Women and children, housing and unemployment, welfare rights! The magnitude of these achievements! And glasnost: the Soviets are facing up to their criminal past, unlike post-World War II Germany and post-Vietnam America.

At the closing plenary session on Sunday, the assemblage broke into small groups for discussion and then

reported on their findings. The "rapporteurs" were required to be women. Among the suggestions for future action: pressuring newspapers for positive reporting on the socialist countries; sabotaging newspaper vending machines (inserting false fronts on boxes with "progressive" news about El Salvador, etc.); pushing the "MacNeil-Lehrer NewsHour" and National Public Radio to the left; increasing political action through the Rainbow Coalition; *more conferences just like this one*. Plans were announced to prepare curricula based on the conference. As one person noted, there are plenty of veterans of the 1960s teaching high school just waiting for this material.

There were many new faces at the conference, newly activated college students, reactivated war-horses, and many who were just returning to the fold. Their organizations are proliferating wildly. They fluttered back to their nesting places in academia, the alternative press, college campuses, the Rainbow Coalition, senior centers, progressive unions, and Communist party headquarters, dedicated to wiping out that nasty word.

Few as they are, anyone who could survive three days of this is a force to be reckoned with. □

SPECTATOR'S JOURNAL

PONDERING PERESTROIKA

by John Train

"Our past has become unpredictable."
—the editor of *Znamia*, 1988

One day last spring, on a trip to Moscow to talk to ministries and institutes, I turned on the television in my hotel room. It actually worked, unlike some of the other pieces of equipment. I was startled to see the face of a much younger Andrei Vishinsky than the white-haired one I remembered from the 1950s when he was the Soviet delegate to the U.N. This Vishinsky had dark hair and black owlsh glasses. An old flickery black-and-white film was showing him addressing a courtroom in harsh and strident tones during the Moscow purge trials. "They should be shot like dogs," he snarled at a series of wretched anti-Stalinists who had been dragged before him. (Alas, these victims of state

John Train's most recent book is Famous Financial Fiascos (Clarkson N. Potter/Crain).

paranoia were indeed shot like dogs.) Then the scene shifted to today, in Red Square, a few hundred yards from where I was sitting at that moment. An old man was grimly reciting his memories of the bad times, not so long ago, when a daring phrase could send you to Siberia, perhaps not to return. (For many years, one of the official heroes held up for the admiration of Soviet youth was an enthusiastic boy who denounced his own parents for a deficiency of socialist zeal.) The TV audience was hearing words that at one time could have meant death for the speaker and listener alike.

Is Perestroika Real?

It's *necessary*, whether or not it ever really happens. Indeed it's a recurring Russian idea: Peter the Great tried something similar, as did Lenin with his New Economic Policy (NEP).

Any monopoly becomes atherosclerotic. Only competition keeps you on

the *qui vive*. So you have to shake things up on occasion. But the most convincing reason for perestroika is that Gorbachev probably has no choice. Here are three and a half reasons:

1. The Soviet nightmare is not West Germany, whose feeble birth rate condemns it to fade away as a great power, but China, whose proud and able population is multiples larger than the Soviet Union's and growing faster. China, by shedding some of Marxism's *impedimenta*—all farms belong to the farmers, for instance—is booming, while the Russians are just whispering about incentives. The possibilities are suggested by Taiwan, which with less than 2 percent of the mainland's population has 30 percent of its GNP. Looking ahead, the Soviets must transform their economy and government drastically to keep up with the traditionally hostile Chinese. Deng himself has complacently said that if perestroika does not work, then the Soviet Union will

lose its superpower status in the next century.

2. Some military analysts underline that the Soviet Union is not yet technically able to manage the most complicated aspects of space defense. It is said that the battle management of the campaign against each ICBM requires a computational power equivalent to one of the large Cray computers. The Soviet Union can quite easily reverse-engineer most pieces of hardware, given enough time. However, Cray's chairman told me that his big machine, quite aside from the immense amount of programming required to set it up for missile defense, would take years to reverse-engineer, by which time the knowledge would be obsolete. In other words, the Soviets can't readily compete in the highest-tech part of strategic defense, although they started earlier, have emphasized it more, and are well ahead of us in some aspects—e.g., particle beams.

Some analysts draw the following

comparison: In the 1930s, both Mussolini and Hitler foresaw war. Mussolini switched over to war production early, and looked fine in his campaigns against Ethiopia, Libya, and so forth. Hitler, on the contrary, let the civilian economy run on full blast for several more years, rapidly building his industrial bases. So when a general European war in fact came, Mussolini found himself frozen into obsolete weapons and an inadequate munitions industry, whereas Hitler was ready to go. Similarly, say these analysts, the Soviet economy requires a period of expansion to stay in the running for the military competition of the next century. This requires military relaxation now, particularly in the strategic defense arena.

3. The Soviet empire (Eastern Europe and so on) is restless. Why accept dictation in economic matters from a country that is not only an economic basket case but admits that its whole approach is wrong? The justification for the Soviets imposing their rule on the satellites was that it would lead the people to the economic promised land. No one believes that anymore, least of all the rulers themselves. One ministry I visited had no computers, and said it was ordering them from Hungary. (The Soviet Union has about one-thousandth as many PCs per capita as the U.S.) Are the Hungarians going to believe in Soviet leadership?

3½. One presumes that the Soviet people can be held down indefinitely. But the economy is still slipping further and further behind the advanced countries, and the people are increasingly aware of what's happening. Western TV and radio, magazines, tourists, and gossip get the word around. Furthermore, there is the nationalities problem. We've all seen what's been happening in the Baltic countries and Armenia. Less known in the U.S. is that the Central Asians live in far worse conditions than the European Russians, and regard them as exploiters. (I never saw a Central Asian behind a desk in a ministry.)

Thus the European Russians know that the other nationalities within the Soviet Union are unhappy (and have two to three times their birthrate!); the Soviet Union knows that the empire is restless; the empire sees its great competitor, China, pushing in front of it; while the socialist camp in general sees the West disappearing out of sight ahead. A grim prospect, quite aside from the SDI problem.

So things *must* change, if they can be changed.

There are those who observe that Gorbachev's proposed changes seem for real, but grumble that the

Russians are only doing it out of necessity, not out of what we would consider democratic good will. Of course! And it is precisely because circumstances *have* forced their hand that one can believe in the authenticity of what is happening.

It's like Afghanistan. No one outside the Institute for Policy Studies orbit claims that the Russians are pulling out because they have achieved their objectives there or have been converted to self-determination for their subject peoples. No: it is because the dead and the losses in tanks and helicopters became intolerable, along with the disastrous loss of face in the rest of the world. It is precisely because we can see why the Russians had no choice that we can be sure the withdrawal is authentic and not a temporary tactical maneuver, like the withdrawals from Hungary and Czechoslovakia before the tanks rolled back in.

All the same, in spite of a vast coordinated campaign of talk, there has so far been little sign of reform outside the biggest cities. The Russians joke that it's like a forest: light at the top and dark at the bottom. And as one General Staff officer said grimly, it hasn't reached the KGB. (Indeed, it may be backed by the KGB to reform the bloated bureaucracy.)

However, Gorbachev has ordered that 500,000 bureaucrats should lose their cars with chauffeurs. With this stroke he created two million determined enemies: the 500,000 drivers and their patrons, plus the 500,000 pairs that find themselves at the head of the line for the next cut . . . not to speak of their families.

And Gorbachev has repeatedly declared that he proposes to fire some 40 percent of the Soviet Union's 18 million managers. Yes . . . over seven million bureaucrats! That's seven million ardent opponents of perestroika. What will happen to them all? Oh, they'll find jobs in the service sector, one is told: the service sector needs to develop. And I heard repeatedly that a huge portion of the top Soviet bureaucracy has been shifted in the last two years, perhaps to loosen up their hold on their positions. You wouldn't do all this unless you meant it.

But Will Gorbachev Succeed?

The Russians are dominated by bureaucrats, not, I suspect, because of Lenin, but because they are Russians. They have an extremely strong herd instinct, and for half a millennium have been ordered about by autocrats in the Kremlin. They have never known anything approaching self-rule. You can't just say "be free!" and make a people free. Freedom must be earned; indeed,

must be fought for. And then its institutions must take root—free courts, civilian control of the army, a free press, and so on. But the entrenched nobility of the Soviet Union, the nomenklatura, is immensely powerful and corrupt. It's like a mythical beast that can't be killed with one blow, but must be poisoned, then beheaded, then burned, then put through a mincing machine and fed to the fish . . . and will regenerate even then. The 1789 revolution didn't end the idea of French aristocracy, just some aristocrats. The aristocratic principle revived soon enough.

And the Russian national experience is quite unlike ours. For roughly half the last 500 years, they have been fighting on their own soil. Since this vast territory is open to invasion from all directions, and since major segments of the empire would prefer to get out, the Soviet Union relies on the organs of state—the KGB, the army, and so forth—to penetrate and destroy potential enemies abroad, and to infiltrate and suppress internal opposition. The challenge has kept these organs fit—and paranoid. They will be exceedingly hard to wrestle down.

So to my mind the odds favor the nobility rather than the reformers, at least for now. Western-style democratic government is not even under discussion, of course. Gorbachev proposes that there be several candidates for each party job, with a limitation on the number of terms of office, but the candidates will naturally come from the party, and the dominant role of the party is not in question. Thus, things may not change that much whatever happens. When every mayor of New York was chosen by Tammany Hall it made little difference who became mayor, any more than it matters who becomes president of Mexico today.

There's another possibility: Perhaps the Soviet empire, like the Roman Empire or the Ottoman Empire or indeed all previous empires, is in a state of irretrievable decay. It is bloated and heterogeneous, which means a huge defense establishment, at crippling expense, to hold it down. A rough figure for the part of Soviet GNP that goes to maintaining their prodigious and growing military establishment is 20 percent—three times our proportion. But that's of an economy half as large as ours and much less efficient, with very little to spare. So it's a killing burden, which stifles everything, at the same time that the productivity of a demoralized population is declining. Perhaps a parallel to Gorbachev is Diocletian, whose endless reorganization and reforms could not forestall his empire's decay. □

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EUROPEAN DOCUMENT



U.S. OUT OF NATO? A FRENCH SCENARIO

by Roger Kaplan

The European allies paid very little attention to the U.S. election last year. Press and politicians alike borrowed the American liberal elite's line that voters were faced with mediocrities who rendered the whole contest an embarrassment to American democracy.

In general, however, George Bush was preferred as the mediocrity they knew, and as soon as he was elected, he began winning points in the European press as a tough guy who had been mistaken for a wimp all these years. This interpretation was all the more pleasing because the one thing Western Europeans are truly worried about is the future of the grand old alliance that has kept the peace here for forty years. After the INF treaty—which in public they approved but in private they view as the beginning of the long-dreaded “decoupling” between the Atlantic allies—they considered it much better to have a conservative in the White House than a liberal.

Yet the Europeans may well err if they think decoupling will be a consequence of American rather than European foreign policy. After INF, the ball is really in their court: they can become the “third pillar” John Kennedy encouraged them to be, thereby turning INF and its aftermath into a great political victory for the West, or they can wait and see. At the moment they are waiting and seeing, with the French foreign minister stating that the question of “modernization,” current jargon for Kennedy’s “third pillar,” should be postponed until Gorbachev’s intentions become clearer.

So far, this situation has not become a major public issue—defense issues rarely are here—but there is a great deal of pressure, especially in Denmark and West Germany, to take Gorbachev at his word, ask the Americans to leave, and expect—or hope for—the best. It is against this background that a remarkable new thriller, *Le Jour le Plus Court* (*The Shortest Day*), was

published here. It is a fictionalized version of what could be an eventual reverse D-Day. As its author, André Soussan, has been pointing out in television and radio debates all over Europe, it need not happen this way. But whether it does or not will not depend on us Americans.

Le Jour le Plus Court begins in 1993. The United States is led by the sort of hard-line anti-Communist Democrat that evidently exists only in the fantasies of Ben Wattenberg and Richard Perle. Western Europe, except France, has relapsed into muddle-headed social democracy, with the chancellor of the *Bundesrepublik* a functioning traitor, committed to the Soviet cause. Greece has left NATO.

Yet matters do not appear precarious, except to people like the editors of *The American Spectator*. Perestroika is chugging along on Western credits, and an immensely attractive Soviet premier named Gorchkov is assuring everyone that his fondest wish is for peace all around. SALT III has effectively denuclearized Europe. President Nixon used to say, “The Soviets don’t want war. They want the world.” But in 1993 no one listens to him much any-

more, although his quip expresses Soviet thinking exactly.

In this deceptively benign context, a mysterious terrorist organization launches an aggressive assault upon U.S. forces stationed in Germany. The worst attack comes when a transport carrying GIs home for Christmas is blown up just after takeoff. A simple message is circulated: the presence of American troops brings insecurity to Europe. The Americans are occupiers, they spread AIDS. It is time for them to get out. The media, lulled by glasnost and the long period of peace that the American Army maintained on the Continent, slant their coverage of the tide of terror with a “blame America” thesis. The U.S. Congress increasingly gives vent to the proposals of isolationist politicians, including the Speaker of the House, a demagogue who, though a member of the President’s party, is one of his worst enemies.

Now this: Before the public has recovered from the shock of the hundreds of young soldiers murdered on Christmas Eve, the terrorists grab a little girl, the daughter of a U.S. Air Force ace, and her mother. In a few days, the pressure on the American leadership becomes unrelenting, as the press hypes the story for all it is worth, including the fact, purely symbolic but potent, that the little hostage is the same age and bears the same name as the President’s daughter. A powerful movement, “S.O.S. Barbara,” takes off in the United States, clamoring for a cave-in on the grounds that the Europeans are ungrateful and are certainly not worth the lives of our sons and daughters.

Then the mom’s head comes back in a bag, along with a little child’s finger. And a message: one month to send the troops home.

The President, Mike Harkins, is advised by Jeane Kirkpatrick and Edward Luttwak look-alikes, and they counsel firmness. The Israelis come to the rescue with information on Mikhail Gorchkov that Harkins can and does use to force him into a deal that would not seem to be a complete U.S.

capitulation. But the immediate problem remains: the terrorists are apparently not under direct Soviet control, and the media circus, complete with a television interview of the brutalized child in an unknown location, renders the President’s position untenable.

Le Jour le Plus Court is, of course, fiction. But André Soussan knows his subject. His characters, their way of thinking, their control or lack of control over events, all have a frightening ring of truth. Soussan is an international security specialist, a former Israeli paratrooper who works in both broadcast and print journalism in France and Denmark, and an editor at the quarterly *Politique Internationale* (which in format resembles *Foreign Affairs* but in content is closer to the *National Interest*).

As Soussan himself admits, his scenario is just that, a scenario. But it is not inconceivable that a comparable conjunction of circumstances could put an American President in the bind Mike Harkins finds himself in. Although some will dismiss Soussan’s novel as a fanciful and improbable thriller, the fact is that he has written a book that is perhaps the most starkly straightforward to date on the question of whether or not, or under what circumstances, U.S. troops should stay in Europe. By resorting to a fast-paced genre, Soussan makes accessible to a large public an issue that thus far has been confined to war colleges, think tanks, high-powered political jet-set conferences, specialized journals, and editorial pages. By positing a crisis leading to a U.S.-Soviet poker game that results in a “global Yalta,” Soussan succeeds in making it very clear that the discussion has been about not only money and defense resources but also the ultimate shape of our strategic position in the world.

To judge by *Le Jour le Plus Court*, Soussan agrees with Irving Kristol, who has been provoking passionate arguments in the U.S. with his sugges-



Roger Kaplan is a Paris-based associate editor of Reader’s Digest.

tion that "NATO is dead" ("Men don't give their lives for NATOs or SEATOs or CENTOs or any other Os," he said at Columbia University last year). Soussan sees NATO as a net strategic minus: it obfuscates our sense of national purpose, while on the European side it substitutes gimmickry for serious defense planning. Thus he pre-

sents a drama wherein the U.S. is virtually pushed out, thereby forcing the Europeans to make up their minds.

The debate in Europe will gather momentum as the new American administration defines its attitude toward "burden-sharing" and "decoupling." In West Germany, Gorbachev is the most popular figure on the interna-

tional stage. Although we used to worry about an eventual "Finlandization" of Europe, the biggest problem may appear in the form of German acceptance—whether or not from terrorist pressure, as Soussan suggests—of "Denmarkization," which is a very selective acceptance of the American umbrella: you may promise to protect

us, especially if that keeps the Soviets on their best behavior, but you may not base your evil weapons on our soil. Or, the Germans (like the Spaniards) may soon add: your soldiers. If American policy-makers do not figure out a way to control this issue and turn it to our nation's advantage, it will control them. □

THE TALKIES



THE SCREENPLAY'S THE THING

by Bruce Bawer

Perhaps the most difficult part of reviewing movies for any monthly publication above the level of *Teen Beat* is deciding which ones to write about. What makes this task difficult, however, is not that there are so many movies to choose from, but that there are so few. Omit the foreign releases, and the limited-distribution films that 95 percent of your readers will never get a chance to see anyway, and what remains? In the average month, very little. Among those currently on tap: something called *Mystic Pizza* that proudly advertises itself as "this year's *Dirty Dancing*!"; the latest specimens of post-*E.T.* space garbage, namely *Cocoon: The Return* and *My Stepmother Is an Alien* (these days, the unusual twist would be a stepmother who *isn't* an alien); and an obviously-not-destined-to-be-a-classic one-joke "comedy" in which Danny DeVito and Arnold Schwarzenegger play twins. (Get it? One of them is very short and plump and the other is tall and muscular! This is "high-concept" moviemaking at its lowest.) Leafing through the movie advertisements in your daily newspaper, you feel as if you've seen all these films before, every last one of them—and not months or years ago but the day before yesterday.

To be sure, every year miraculously brings a handful of fine and memorable American movies. But the overwhelming majority of new commercial films are as mindlessly conceived, constructed, and composed as they are competently produced. Indeed, many an intelligent moviegoer in the late eighties may well conclude that movies are technically as impressive as

ever (and in some ways more impressive), but that the scripts are just plain awful. Well, for what it's worth, I agree, and so does Stanley Kauffmann, the longtime film critic of the *New Republic*. In a recent issue of that journal, Kauffmann unburdened himself of some interesting observations about contemporary American screenwriting. "Screenwriting," he remarked, "lags behind every other aspect of filmmaking. . . . Week after week in this column and in the box on this page [i.e., of "Films Worth Seeing"], I note films in which all the elements except the scripts are commendable." Why is this the case? Largely, he argued, because arty, quirky, personal, and/or message-bearing films like *The Hire Hand*, *Pocket Money*, and *Go Tell the Spartans* (ugh!), which proliferated in the seventies, are no longer being made in great numbers. And why aren't they? Largely, Kauffmann argued further, because filmmaking expenses have gone through the roof and producers, eager to reach the widest possible audience and thereby recoup their investments, have quashed "the spirit of adventure" that flourished in the seventies. "Most American screenwriting," Kauffmann wrote, "now seems a bid at a roulette table, neither slick engineering for a reliable audience [as in the old Hollywood] nor personal conviction [as in the seventies]."

Kauffmann is, of course, absolutely correct about the awfulness of most contemporary screenplays. The average American film script today is more artificial and more cynically contrived than ever, and is aimed at a far more puerile mentality than mainstream Hollywood pictures ever have been. This being the case, however, I don't understand how Kauffmann can sug-

gest that current movies don't represent "slick engineering" geared to a specific audience. On the contrary, American movies—on the whole—are slicker than at any time in history. They're aimed at teens and pre-teens. And what's most woefully missing from them is not the "spirit of adventure" of the seventies but the relative sophistication and dramatic craftsmanship that routinely characterized the better American movies of two or three generations ago.

No doubt, one would be hard put to defend most of the products of Hollywood's so-called Golden Era as art. But to watch even some run-of-the-mill Hollywood movies of the thirties and forties is to marvel, time and again, at the intricacy and tautness of their dramatic structure, and at the economy and wit of their characterization. (Relative, that is, to contemporary commercial films.) The most recent innovation of the Ted Turner empire is a network called TNT (for "Turner Network Television"), which devotes most of its airtime to half-century-old B-movies that Turner picked up a while back in a package deal with MGM; the remarkable thing about these films—the majority of which are so obscure (Ina Claire in *Rebound*? Dick Powell in *The Singing Marine*?) that they are new to even the most fanatical of contemporary cineastes—is how watchable they are, how well they hold up. They'll never be mistaken for masterpieces, God knows, but they "work," because they're put together properly; they have focus, shape, conflict, tension.

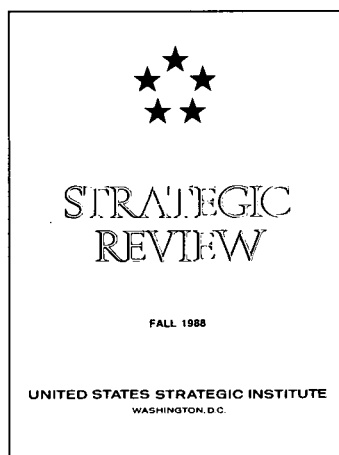
The principal weakness of today's films, by contrast, is that most of them

are written by people who don't know anything about dramatic structure or character development, who have seen every movie in the last ten years but have never read a word of Aristotle or Aeschylus or, for that matter, Noël Coward. Does this tell us anything profound about the *gestalt* or the *Weltanschauung* or whatever of the contemporary American screenwriter? No, it doesn't (Kauffmann's fancy analysis to that effect notwithstanding). Rather, it reflects an extremely simple—but thoroughly devastating—failing on the part of the producers and studio chiefs who select and approve and initiate projects. For the plain fact is that—as anyone in certain sections of Los Angeles, anyway, is well aware—a considerable proportion of the population of Southern California is writing screenplays nowadays. People who have never read a book are writing them; people who wouldn't write a short story because they can't manufacture a coherent grammatical sentence are writing them. And there would be nothing harmful in this state of affairs—let them scribble away, if it makes them happy!—except that the film business today is largely dominated by people who don't know anything about drama, either, and who have no respect for writing or writers.

Now, the old studio bosses and producers were hardly connoisseurs of art. They didn't read literature, didn't care about books like *The Great Gatsby* or *The Sound and the Fury*. But they knew enough to recognize the importance of good writing to a movie, and when a writer like Fitzgerald or Faulkner made a name for himself as a literary figure, the studio bosses, who had knowledgeable subordinates around to inform them about such occurrences, were

Bruce Bawer is The American Spectator's movie reviewer.

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quick to respond with job offers. Yes, they sometimes treated their contract writers abominably—switched them without explanation from one script to another, had their work rewritten and rewritten again by other contract writers, and suchlike. But their goal was always the same: the best-written script possible. And many of the scripts that became films, under their auspices, were wonderful ones. Can one even imagine a script like *The Women*, for instance—in which Anita Loos and Jane Murfin actually improved on the play by Clare Boothe—being produced nowadays? Or, for that matter, *Mr. Skeffington* or *Ninotchka* or *Pride and Prejudice* or *Spellbound* or *The Story of Louis Pasteur*?

It seems impossible. Not because the scriptwriting talent isn't there, but because the people selecting scripts typically don't know a bad one from a good one. Indeed, many of them don't even think of a film in terms of its script—they think of it as a "project," a "concept." To them, the script is almost a peripheral consideration, a set of pages no more or less important to the production than the daily call sheet. That writing is a special talent, that different people have it in different degrees, that there is such a thing as dramatic structure, that any of this might have more than a casual connection with the ultimate quality of a film: of all this and more the average studio executive of today is astonishingly innocent. To such an individual, what's important is (a) that a film have a hot star in the lead, (b) that it tell a story which can be related in one sentence, and which is similar to the story of at least one recently successful movie, and (c) that it not be above the heads of *anybody*. Not above the heads of the youngest children, or the most brain-dead and rock-obsessed teenagers, or the slowest of the "mentally challenged." In such a marketplace, obviously, the screenwriter with an original idea and a talent for literate dialogue is actually at a disadvantage, and the unlettered amateur with a thoroughly derivative story idea and the mentality, vocabulary, and emotional maturity of a 12-year-old has pretty much everything he needs in order to achieve fame and fortune.

Not that he will necessarily be successful, of course. There are so many bad scripts circulating out there that whether *your* bad script will be optioned and produced is something of a crapshoot. Stanley Kauffmann is right, then, when he suggests that most screenwriting in this country is like "a bid at a roulette table." But the bidding takes place not at the writing stage, as he seems to think, but at the submit-

sion stage. Writing scripts, nowadays, is very much like buying a lottery ticket.

And, Kauffmann to the contrary, these circumstances do not represent a dramatic departure from those under which people like Robert Altman and Peter Fonda operated when they made "personal" and statement-oriented movies like *California Split* and *Easy Rider* two decades or so ago. As a matter of fact, it was precisely such films that helped to give professionalism in scriptwriting a bad name, and to make the idea of "good writing" passé in Lotusland. Certainly the decline of the old Hollywood was in many ways a good thing; there are remarkable pictures of various kinds made in America these days (one thinks of *After Hours*, *The World According to Garp*, and *Blue Velvet*, among others) which would have been unimaginable in the days of Louis B. Mayer and Jack Warner. But it can't be denied that the present pathetic state of the typical American screenplay is very much a consequence of the rise of the Altmans and Fondas. As Kauffmann observes, those filmmakers thought of themselves as speaking to the hip teenagers and twentysomethings of the Vietnam Era, members of what Kauffmann calls "the Film Generation"—a generation identifiable not only by their tendency to make film their art of choice but by their elevation of it above all the other arts (about which they, in many instances, knew little or nothing). It was in an attempt to reach this audience (which was much more comfortable with moving images than with words) that Altman, Fonda, and company effectively brought the level of discourse in mainstream American movies down a notch. The creators of the pre-teen fare that constitutes most of America's movie product in the late eighties have simply followed their lead, lowering the level another notch or two.

Kauffmann speaks admiringly of the "verity" of dialogue in contemporary American film, as compared to the dialogue in Hollywood pictures of two or three generations ago. Yes, the characters in most movies nowadays do talk like real people. Real dumb people. They all, in fact, sound the same. Forget all the special effects; the best way to astonish a middle-American movie audience these days would be to have a character say something witty or clever. If Woody Allen's movies seem brilliant to so many people, in fact, it's mainly because he doesn't conform to the unwritten rules that govern these matters. His characters don't deliver many profound lines; they just talk like educated people, which makes them the rarest of rarities in movieland today. □

BOOK REVIEWS

Even in its bare outlines, the life of A. M. Rosenthal would seem to offer promising material for a biographer. Born in Canada to immigrant Russian Jews, Abe Rosenthal grew up in the Bronx section of New York City. The family was poor. When he was a teenager, his father was seriously injured while working as a house painter; he languished for three years before he died. By the time Abe was eighteen, four of his five older sisters had died as well, one of them in childbirth. He himself had contracted osteomyelitis, an agonizing and crippling infection of the bone marrow. After a series of botched treatments, he borrowed money to travel to the Mayo Clinic, where doctors performed, without payment, an operation that lasted eighteen hours.

Thus saved from becoming a cripple, Abe finished high school and attended the City College of New York. At a friend's suggestion, he tried out for the college newspaper and discovered he had a talent for journalism. Soon he was hustling stories as a campus stringer, first for the *New York Herald Tribune*, then for the *New York Times*. One day he asked the *Times's* city editor what his chances might be of getting a full-time job. It was wartime and the paper was short-handed; he was told to report for work in two weeks. When he showed up, the city editor said he had been rejected by the *Times's* medical department, but he could be hired as a temporary employee, without insurance or benefits. Rosenthal accepted instantly, quitting college to embark on what was to become one of the most successful careers in American journalism.

The story of this career is told by Joseph Goulden in *Fit to Print: A. M. Rosenthal and His Times*. Goulden recounts how, as a young city reporter, Rosenthal got a scoop on Andrei Gromyko that landed him his first big assignment, covering the United Nations; how, as a correspondent in India and Poland in the 1950s, he established a reputation as a gifted writer of feature stories and political analysis; how in the early 1960s he was picked to be metropolitan editor and given the task of revitalizing the *Times's* approach to reporting and writing news; and how, in the 1970s, as managing

Steven C. Munson, who worked for the New York Times Magazine from 1980 to 1981, is director of policy at the Voice of America. The opinions expressed here are his own.

FIT TO PRINT: A.M. ROSENTHAL AND HIS TIMES

Joseph C. Goulden/Lyle Stuart/\$21.95

Steven C. Munson

editor and executive editor, he carried out a transformation of the entire paper that saved it from financial ruin.

Unfortunately, in telling this story, Goulden shows very little appreciation for his subject. In the prologue he announces that Abe Rosenthal is "not a very likeable human being," and this statement sets the tone for what follows. By book's end, Goulden is describing how he sat in the apartment of Rosenthal's former mistress and helped her plot her revenge. Indeed, Goulden displays a feeling of superiority to Rosenthal throughout, and, apart from a few *pro forma* acknowledgments of his talents as a reporter and editor, writes about him with undisguised contempt.

The ostensible reason for his loathing is the same as that offered by the dozens of *Times* employees, current and former, named and anonymous, who served as Goulden's primary source of information and with whose collective point of view he completely identifies himself. Their complaint, or so they have told Goulden in a seemingly infinite number of ways, is that Abe Rosenthal was mean: mean as a colleague or as a superior or as a

subordinate; mean as an enemy or as a friend; mean drunk or sober; mean justly or unjustly; but, in any case, mean. Now this complaint, to anyone who has ever worked for a large organization in the business of gathering news, will sound both familiar and absurd; familiar because there are so many against whom it has been lodged, and absurd because it is so widely accepted that behaving like an SOB is often, or sometimes, necessary simply to get people to do what they're supposed to do. Being mean distinguishes Abe Rosenthal hardly at all, and therefore cannot be the real cause of the animosity directed against him.

What, then, lies behind it? In part the anti-Rosenthal animus springs from a certain social attitude, best exemplified in Goulden's book by the figure of C. L. Sulzberger. Sulzberger, who for many years was the *Times's* foreign affairs columnist, took an instant dislike to Rosenthal when he was still a young reporter covering the U.N. During a trip to Paris, where Sulzberger was based, Rosenthal made a scene in a hotel over some traveler's checks that

had been stolen from his room. Sulzberger, who was called in to straighten things out, decided that Rosenthal was not the sort who could be permitted to represent the *New York Times* in a foreign capital, and for the next five years he used his power on the paper to prevent Rosenthal from getting an overseas assignment. In later years, writes Goulden, Sulzberger would sigh deeply, saying, "'The *New York Times* run by that man?' He would then shake his head slowly and wrinkle his nostrils, as if something unpleasant were around." Goulden also quotes Sulzberger as saying, in regard to a run-in he had with Rosenthal in the 1970s, "Yapping little dogs should be kicked, not heeded."

Sulzberger's disdain was shared by another, to use Goulden's word, "gentleman" of the *New York Times*, James "Scotty" Reston. During his brief tenure as executive editor and Rosenthal's boss, Reston came up with the idea of establishing a special corps of Ivy League-educated correspondents who would be accountable only to him and would operate separately from the *Times* newsroom, which Rosenthal controlled. When Rosenthal heard about the scheme, he confronted Reston and forced him to abandon it. Reston later remarked, in referring to the incident, that Rosenthal "wanted something more than I did, and he got it. That's pretty much the story of Rosenthal's professional life, isn't it?"

To such sentiments Goulden gives his unmistakable assent, adding his own unflattering references to Rosenthal's unkempt appearance, bad manners, and untoward ambitiousness. If some of Rosenthal's critics see in him only the grasping and vulgar Jew of their intolerant imaginations—and such refined and highly assimilated Jews as C. L. Sulzberger are by no means unsympathetic to this attitude—others find him objectionable simply because he feels no need to apologize for his ambition or for doing what was necessary to achieve it. Either way, the hostility of Rosenthal's critics leads them to downplay or obscure the fact that the story of his life—which is the story of a rise from humble origins to a position of power, fame, and wealth—is a typical fulfillment of the American dream.

Ultimately, however, social or personal prejudice goes only so far in explaining the hostility toward Abe Rosenthal. In fact, the main, if unstated, complaint against him is neither



social nor personal; it is political. Goulden unwittingly makes this clear—just as, with the same inadvertence, he illuminates the true character and personality of his subject—through the numerous anecdotes he tells about Rosenthal's conflicts over the years with his reporters and editors. From these office stories, thoughtful readers can get some idea of what Rosenthal believes and why he has been so successful.

He is, first and foremost, a man who has a mind of his own and isn't afraid to speak it. In 1958, for example, when he was sent as a correspondent to Warsaw, Rosenthal and his wife were given a party by Sydney Gruson, the departing correspondent and a *Times* veteran. As Daniel Schorr related the incident to Goulden: "Sydney began expounding about the liberal atmosphere in Poland, and how 'this is really becoming a liberal society, with

freedom of speech.' Abe cut him short. 'Sydney, they don't have freedom of *speech*—they have freedom of *talking*, that's all. They give you an illusion.' "

To judge by the other anecdotes Goulden tells, this is vintage Rosenthal: sharp, tough, direct. As an editor, he had a clear idea of the kind of stories he wanted and of how they should be written. When he didn't like a piece, he would call the reporter and tell him how to fix it, adding that if he couldn't do it, there was always somebody else around who could. Confident of his own instincts and judgment, Rosenthal was not a man to back down. At a meeting requested by a group of reporters who wanted to complain about his way of editing, Rosenthal told one: "You were nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. You would never have been nominated if Jerry Gold [a copy editor] hadn't worked on your stories." To another, he was even harsher: "You were a failure when we sent you to Brazil. The paper carried you, and

saved you, and here you are, bitching about editors."

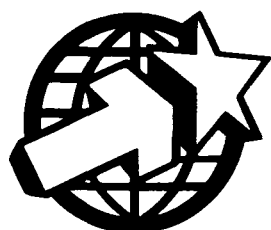
This meeting took place in the late 1960s, at a time when Rosenthal was forcefully resisting pressure to abandon the paper's traditional standards in favor of what was being called the "new journalism." In 1968, he fought with Harrison Salisbury, a *Times* eminence, over coverage of the violence-ridden Democratic National Convention, demanding time and again that editors change copy to "take out the goddamned editorializing." When Salisbury complained to Rosenthal that he was "cutting the guts out of our stories," Rosenthal replied, "No I'm not, I'm trying to make them honest."

As this incident suggests, Rosenthal tried to resist the radicalization of the American media that began in the late 1960s and proceeded apace in the years that followed. He was not always successful. In the case of Seymour Hersh, for example, and his various "exposés" of the CIA, Rosenthal let his desire to beat the competition get the better of his judgment. As he once told someone, Hersh "is like a puppy that isn't quite housebroken, but as long as he's pissing on [Washington Post editor] Ben Bradlee's carpet, let him go." At the same time, however, Rosenthal clearly had misgivings about Hersh. Goulden notes that Rosenthal used to greet the reporter with a pat on the back and the words, "Well, well, how's my little commie today?"—a remark that reveals no small degree of anxiety about the kind of articles Hersh was writing and he, Rosenthal, was allowing into print.

Unlike most of his colleagues, both inside and outside the *Times*, Rosenthal usually seemed to know when he had a story that didn't pass muster. During the 1982 Lebanon war, Thomas Friedman, in one of his dispatches from Beirut, described an Israeli bombing raid as "indiscriminate"; when the word was cut from his story, he publicly complained, provoking charges of censorship against the *Times*. Although it was later revealed that Israeli pilots had carried out their bombing runs in ways designed to minimize civilian casualties, Goulden presents Friedman's complaint as though it were valid. He claims that Rosenthal, as a Jew who strongly supported Israel, expected his Middle East correspondents to follow "implicit marching orders" to shield "Israel from the probing criticisms directed at other countries." In truth, of course, what Rosenthal was trying to do in the *Times's* reporting on Lebanon was to maintain decent journalistic standards at a time when the rest of the American media were engaged in a frenzy of anti-Israel reportage and commentary.

If Abe Rosenthal won few friends for trying to be fair-minded in covering Israel, he perhaps earned the most enemies for the way he handled an altogether different issue: Communism. In 1982, the *Village Voice* published an article alleging that the Polish émigré novelist Jerzy Kosinski was a literary fraud supported by the CIA. In response, the *Times*, at Rosenthal's behest, ran a lengthy piece that not only refuted the *Voice's* charges but showed they were part of a disinformation campaign being waged against Kosinski by Polish intelligence. The article provoked a wave of denunciation in the national press, with newspapers across the country accusing the *Times* of "favoritism" on the grounds that Kosinski and Rosenthal were friends. This charge, however, was simply a blind for the real objection—which was that Rosenthal had used his newspaper to point out the truth about the behavior of Communists. That it was this offense that so infuriated Rosenthal's critics was made plain by the treatment meted out to the author of the article, John Corry. According to Goulden, David Halberstam, a long-time acquaintance of Corry's, stopped him in the lobby of the *Times* building and, shaking his fist at Corry, said, "How could you? How *could* you?" Corry's colleague Harrison Salisbury cut him dead. Other people stopped speaking to him.

This episode should give some idea of how much courage it took for Abe Rosenthal to struggle with his reporters and editors, and with the rest of the media as well, and not only survive for forty-odd years but flourish. While there is, to be sure, much to criticize in the way Rosenthal handled the *Times* until his retirement as executive editor in 1986, Goulden's book is not a serious attempt to come to grips with such matters. It is mainly a rehash of the same criticisms of Rosenthal that have been making the rounds in journalistic and literary circles for the past couple of decades. In that time, and despite the persistent attacks, Abe Rosenthal has refused to be intimidated either by the gentlemen of the press or by the left-wing orthodoxy that has long since taken the place of serious or independent thought among them. He has resisted, moreover, with an admirable élan and sense of humor, perhaps best illustrated by a story Goulden tells about a staff meeting Rosenthal held in 1985. Just prior to the arrival of a group of female editors, Rosenthal turned to the men around him and said, "OK, now let's bring in the cupcakes." It is hard to dislike a man who has the insouciance to talk that way these days. □



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IN PURSUIT: OF HAPPINESS AND GOOD GOVERNMENT

Charles Murray/Simon and Schuster/\$19.95

Kenneth Minogue

In his last book, *Losing Ground* (1984), Charles Murray pinpointed the paradox that the more money the government spent on the poor, the worse their situation seemed to get. By most of the available indicators, the poor were increasingly numerous and decreasingly independent. What Murray has done in his new book is to get down to the really serious question: What does poverty actually mean?

Murray's target has always been the social engineer, sitting in his bureau in Washington juggling statistics with which to lobby for more public money. The bureaucrat's basic belief is that nothing can be done without more resources. The essence of social engineering is breaking into such mechanical relationships as "the vicious circle of poverty." Success or failure is whatever may show up in the indicators, such as the poverty line. But since America is a dynamic society, these indicators are themselves constantly being redefined, so it becomes hard to compare like with like. The social engineer as Washington bureaucrat resembles in his operations nothing so much as the way Robin Hood explained social policy in a famous *New Yorker* cartoon: "Here is the way it works: we take from the rich and give to the poor—keeping only enough for salaries, travel, equipment, depreciation, and so on, and so on."

Murray's main charge is that social engineering has failed. It is not merely that social policies are frequently ineffective; they actually make things worse. Yet no poverty is as intractable as that which afflicts the imagination of the poverty lobby itself. This is a lobby whose only solution seems to be egging Robin Hood on to fresh outrages against the rich. In *Pursuit: Of Happiness and Good Government* is Murray thinking poverty out anew. He might well have called it "Breaking Ground."

His bold first move is to shift the debate away from supposedly objective indicators such as income variation or

the poverty line and toward what really counts: human happiness. But who can measure happiness? Is it not a thing of fleeting moods? The answer is that there is at least a long tradition of thought about happiness among the political philosophers, a tradition ready and waiting to irrigate the dry slopes of social policy. Murray takes his initial bearings from Aristotle's *Ethics*, in which happiness—*eudaimonia*, a good spirit, as it were—is understood to flower in the fulfillment of man's highest and most human capacities.

Aristotle is the vogue philosopher of the moment, partly because some socialists think (wrongly) that they can derive their version of distributive justice from him. His developmental idea of human life is a useful stick with which to beat the materialism of the consumer. But there is also another tradition of thought about happiness: its source is the British empiricists of the early modern period. It was this tradition that led Nietzsche to sneer that only the English cared about happiness, but he failed to understand what British philosophers and America's Founding Fathers meant by the inalienable right to the pursuit of happiness, which gives Murray his title. This is a formula which expresses that individuality under law that has always been the strength of Anglo-Saxon cohesion.

The social engineer avoids such dangerous ideas as happiness because his cast of mind is essentially bureaucratic: he is only at home with global statistics and ideas about social class. This remoteness from the actual is compounded by the fact that, as Murray complains at one point, there are now few administrators of social policy in Washington who have had any direct knowledge of what it is like to be poor.

The idea of happiness contains one powerfully subversive implication: Happiness depends in part upon the person in question. No one can be given a fixed supply, no matter how many food stamps, income supplements, or other social services may be received. All that governments can

do is to affect the "enabling conditions" for happiness. But these are, of course, important. No one is likely to be happy when hungry, homeless, insecure, and isolated.

What is it, precisely, that people need to be happy? Murray takes his bearings from Abraham Maslow's 1943 specification of human needs. They begin simple and become increasingly complex. First on his list are organic requirements such as food, water, shelter, and sex. Next, there is a need for safety and order. Meaninglessness and the strain of constant threat can destroy happiness. Third, there is a human need for intimacy, for belonging to social groups, starting with the family. It is a measure of how far Maslow was pressing the slippery idea of "need" that he went on to identify two further types of need. The first was for self-esteem and especially self-respect, the second, the need for expressing one's capacities. Murray has some interesting things to say about the extent to which money can buy happiness, and about the relation between misery and violent crime, but his basic concern is with the more complicated needs for self-respect and self-realization.

The reason is obvious: Any bureaucracy facing up to poverty as a problem to be solved by governments will emphasize the basic needs, because these can be satisfied by supplying material things, and that is what governments and bureaucrats can organize. Just such a policy will spring instantly to the mind of the unfortunate social engineer who has absorbed the vocabulary of the poverty industry. That talk is all of *under-privilege*, *deprivation*, *disadvantage*. Words like these make it clear that the poor are deficient in some desirable commodity that governments can supply.

Murray's argument thus reveals a damaging paradox at the heart of the vision of the social engineer: the very fact that the poor receive from government agencies what most other people organize for themselves may well damage their sense of self-respect. Among the more striking of Murray's pages are those in which he explores the idea of the dignity of the poor and argues that self-respect cannot be faked and is indispensable to happiness. To enjoy self-respect means that one must feel that one is a net contributor to the world, and however prone human beings may be to illusion on this score, they all recognize some internalized standards in terms of which they may fail. This means that there is no escaping the "stigma" of social dependency. Murray does not for a moment suggest that stigma should be used as a deliberate

instrument of social control; he is merely pointing to a reality of the human condition whose full recognition, he argues, would revolutionize social policy.

No less indispensable to happiness is the human passion for meeting challenges. This is an inclination that humans seem to share with rats, for Murray, in the constant trawl through the psychology journals that is a notable feature of the book, has come across experiments which show that rats expecting equal rewards from both familiar and unfamiliar paths often choose the unfamiliar one. This suggests that we can credit them with something like a natural sense of adventure. "Challenge," Murray writes, generalizing the point, "is a resource for meeting the human need called enjoyment, just as food is a resource for meeting the human need called nourishment."

Further, as those of us know who play games when walking along pavements with cracks in them, challenges can be created in the course of any activity whatever. One of the more unfortunate notions to lodge itself in the heads of schoolteachers has been a sneering attitude toward supposedly menial and "dead-end" jobs. While no doubt intended to spur on their charges to greater effort, such attitudes are deeply destructive of the whole idea of the dignity of labor. Murray finds some striking illustrations of how in one case a waitress, in another a telephonist dealing with directory inquiries, made demands on themselves for the stylish performance of their tasks. Among the main barriers to the reintegration of the poor into modern societies are the meritocratic snobberies we have so foolishly allowed to flower in intellectual circles. Education in our century, inheriting a spiritual tradition, has sold out to relevance, ambition, and extrinsic rewards. From a highly eccentric vantage point in the modern psychology of happiness, Murray has ventured to re-create something that long seemed lost: the New England tradition of moral seriousness about work.

In Pursuit: Of Happiness and Good Government is simultaneously a work of philosophical reflection and scientific popularization. It is easy to read, but the basic argument is complex and difficult. Its organization into sections does not seem to me ideally calculated to bring out what is an immensely subtle argument, one that carefully distances itself from obvious political partialities. It is continually honest about the force of the evidence on which it is based. It will certainly have a major impact on thinking about social policy, but its real subject is the moral quality of Western, and especially American, life. □

Kenneth Minogue is Reader in Political Science at the London School of Economics and author of *The Liberal Mind*.

PERILOUS STATECRAFT: AN INSIDER'S ACCOUNT
OF THE IRAN-CONTRA AFFAIR

Michael A. Ledeen/Charles Scribner's Sons/\$19.95

George Szamuely

Even as the undistinguished congressional Iran-contra hearings were bumbling to their ineffectual conclusion in 1987, the predictable op-ed and editorial pages were already beginning to purr. A demon had been exorcised from the body politic; the reign of the ideologues was at an end; henceforth bipartisanship in foreign policy would have to prevail. Policy-making could no longer be entrusted to the NSC or the CIA. The former was to go back to something called "co-ordinating policy"; the latter to "intelligence gathering." Exclusive license to conduct foreign policy would be awarded to the State Department while the Congress would be told everything about everything in time, on time, and, if possible, ahead of time.

Now of course all of this was rank political opportunism. It was not the ideologues but the so-called pragmatists who were the players in the melodrama. Can one imagine Ollie North as a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute? Or John Poindexter writing a political column in the *Washington Times*? Or Bud McFarlane doing a stint at the *Presswatch in The American Spectator*? Moreover, the policy of swapping arms for American hostages with Iran was first approved by President Carter back in 1980. It was the moderate Shultz who wanted to strike back at terrorists at their home base and complained of America becoming the "Hamlet of nations, worrying endlessly over whether and how to respond." And it was the hard-line ideologue Weinberger who droned on about the need for "congressional support" and of resorting to arms only "as a last resort." As for the original June 1985 National Security Decision Directive that first suggested selling arms to Iran, its phraseology seemed to belong to those stern admonitory editorials that the *New York Times* specializes in. It spoke of the need to "encourage Western allies and friends to help Iran meet its requirements so as to reduce the attractiveness of Soviet assistance and trade offers while demonstrating the

value of correct relations with the West."

But this made no difference. As far as liberal opinion went, it was Reaganism that had to be shown to have been discredited. Who cared about Reagan's "out-to-lunch" style of management? Everyone had always known about that. During the hearings the question "What did the President know and when did he know it?" was only slightly more frequently repeated than the question "What did Elliott Abrams know and when did he know it?" And as for Michael Ledeen—well known to readers of this journal—whose role in this affair was perfectly proper and hardly ideological, he found his motives, his expertise, his academic credentials, and his journalistic skills called into question. Needless to say, Sidney Blumenthal led the pack with Christopher Hitchens not far behind and the likes of Elizabeth Drew on his tail. Moreover, at the congressional hearings Ledeen was repeatedly slandered without ever being given a chance to present his case. ("Even McCarthy had guaranteed that a person defamed in public session could appear before the committee to clear his name," Ledeen writes.) As always, the ad hominem line of attack is the laziest. Consequently, few of Ledeen's critics have taken the trouble to question the policy of the "opening to Iran," of which Ledeen has been the most articulate exponent.

Most of his book is taken up with his own, the U.S. government's, and the Israeli government's tortuous negotiations with Manucher Ghorbanifar, an Iranian businessman who claimed to be in touch with high-up people back home who wanted to improve relations with the West and get rid of some of the more objectionable aspects of their theocracy. Ghorbanifar succeeded in selling a bizarre scheme. Iran badly needed arms, and since everything in Khomeini's inventory belonged to the era when the Shah was being armed to the teeth by the West, only the West could help him out now. In return, not only was it possible that there might be a diplomatic breakthrough between the United States and Iran, but Iran would help to release American hostages held by the Hezbollah in Lebanon. Israel would sell Iran TOW antitank and HAWK anti-aircraft missiles in its arsenal and these in turn would be replaced by the Pentagon. To the charge that this was a violation of Operation Staunch—dating back to December 1983 when the State Department instructed its embassies in countries believed to be involved in arms trade with Iran to urge their host governments to stop transferring their arms to Iran—Ledeen breezily declares that Operation Staunch "was created for a specific purpose: to bring sufficient pressure to bear on Iran so that the Ayatollah would feel compelled to change his policies. . . . [This] proposal from the Iranian government promised just such a change . . . and asked us—as a gesture of our willingness to change—to permit Iran to purchase some weapons that had been 'staunched.'"

Ledeen, who was working as a part-time consultant to the NSC and who had been introduced to Ghorbanifar by the Israelis, clearly had signed on for the whole deal: "I agreed with the President's decision to approve the sale of the original TOWs, and I still think it was

reasonable." Ledeen appears to be justified in his claim never to have supported the arms-for-hostages policy, which began to be pursued only in January 1986, by which time Ollie North had taken over Ledeen's intermediary role between the U.S., Iran, and Israel. Nonetheless, where was the guarantee that the Iranian request was not just a ruse to get badly needed weapons out of the United States? It is perfectly understandable why the Israelis should have wanted to go through with this deal. The emergence of a clear victor was not in their interest. Besides, they stood to have rusty weapons replaced by shiny new ones. But from the beginning, U.S. objectives were confused.

During the first shipment of the TOWs to Tehran in August 1985, the revolutionary guard seized the missiles at the airport. Only now did Ledeen apparently think the sale of arms was a mistake. Contradicting his earlier claims, he says he was always skeptical of Ghorbanifar's idea that the sale of the weapons would strengthen the hands of the moderate, pro-Western faction: "it was . . . a sale of weapons to the Khomeini regime. And since I favored an effort to strike a blow to Khomeini and change the nature of the Iranian regime, I certainly did not want to strengthen the regime itself. Later, when I met with a representative of the pro-Western faction, he confirmed this view . . . and indicated that he, too, thought it was a great error to sell weapons."

Now, if this is Ledeen's final judgment, then he is surely right. The problem is that U.S. policy-makers had no idea what they were trying to do by selling the arms. Did they believe Iran was losing the war with Iraq and consequently needed all the assistance it could get? In which case why was no attempt made to spell out publicly the strategic implications of an Iranian defeat? Or did they really believe what Ghorbanifar was saying about the need to help out the moderate anti-Khomeini forces? Or was the goal to move Iran, whether under Khomeini or anyone else, back into a pro-Western direction?

Although the book's title is *Perilous Statecraft*, at times a more apt description of the events covered by Ledeen might be "reckless statecraft." Robert McFarlane's secret trip to Tehran in May 1986, for instance, to a country whose contempt for international law was already well established, could easily have ended in disaster: What would have been the response of the U.S. government if the Iranians had seized McFarlane—by then a private citizen—and paraded him on camera before the world?

Also, Ledeen recounts the horrifying episode of the flight of the El Al Boeing 747, loaded to the brim with eighty HAWK anti-aircraft missiles, from Tel Aviv to Lisbon, where the arms were to



George Szamuely is a former associate editor of the *Times Literary Supplement*.

be transferred to an American commercial plane. (The roundabout route was to avoid any embarrassing disclosure on the world air-traffic monitoring systems of a flight having been made from Tel Aviv to Tehran.) The plane had taken off without Ollie North having obtained landing permission from the Portuguese government. With the plane hovering overhead, the Iberians, upon learning the nature of the cargo, demanded a written, formal request from McFarlane. Since the operation was supposed to be a secret, McFarlane could not afford to put anything down on paper. Lisbon refused permission to land. At this point, the pilot might quite easily have been tempted to make an emergency landing. Instead he bravely flew back to Tel Aviv. But it was a close-run thing. Revelation of the enterprise the plane was engaged in might, in such circumstances, have ended in an embarrassing international crisis.

Ledeen makes much of the folly of the Administration placing the issue of the hostages at the forefront of their dealings with Iran, instead of looking for ways to come to some general understanding between the two countries. He may well be right, though interestingly he seems to suggest that the Iranians had every reason to complain the Americans did not keep their side of the bargain (they were charged exorbitant amounts for the weapons, the HAWKS were ludicrously out of date, and so on) and that this may explain their tardiness in responding to American requests to help with the hostages.

But the real flaw lies in the premise of the "opening to Iran" policy. The phrase obviously tries to recall Nixon's "opening to China." But are the stakes comparable? Iran is a fifth-rate power, unable to defeat Iraq in eight long years of war. It is in no position to threaten the Soviet Union. On the contrary, the Soviets could clean up in Iran at a time of their choosing. There even exists a treaty, dating back to 1921, abrogated by Khomeini but not by the Kremlin, according to which the Russians claim a right to intervene militarily in Iran should they ever feel threatened. In other words, the Iranians have every reason to fear the Bear across the 1,250-mile border. In 1985, it had become obvious to the Iranian leadership that their policy of fomenting fundamentalist Islamic revolution had failed. Isolated within the Islamic world, unable to win a monstrous war, faced without any allies against the Soviet Union, they turned to the one power who might do something for them. In this game America had all the cards, the Iranians, virtually none.

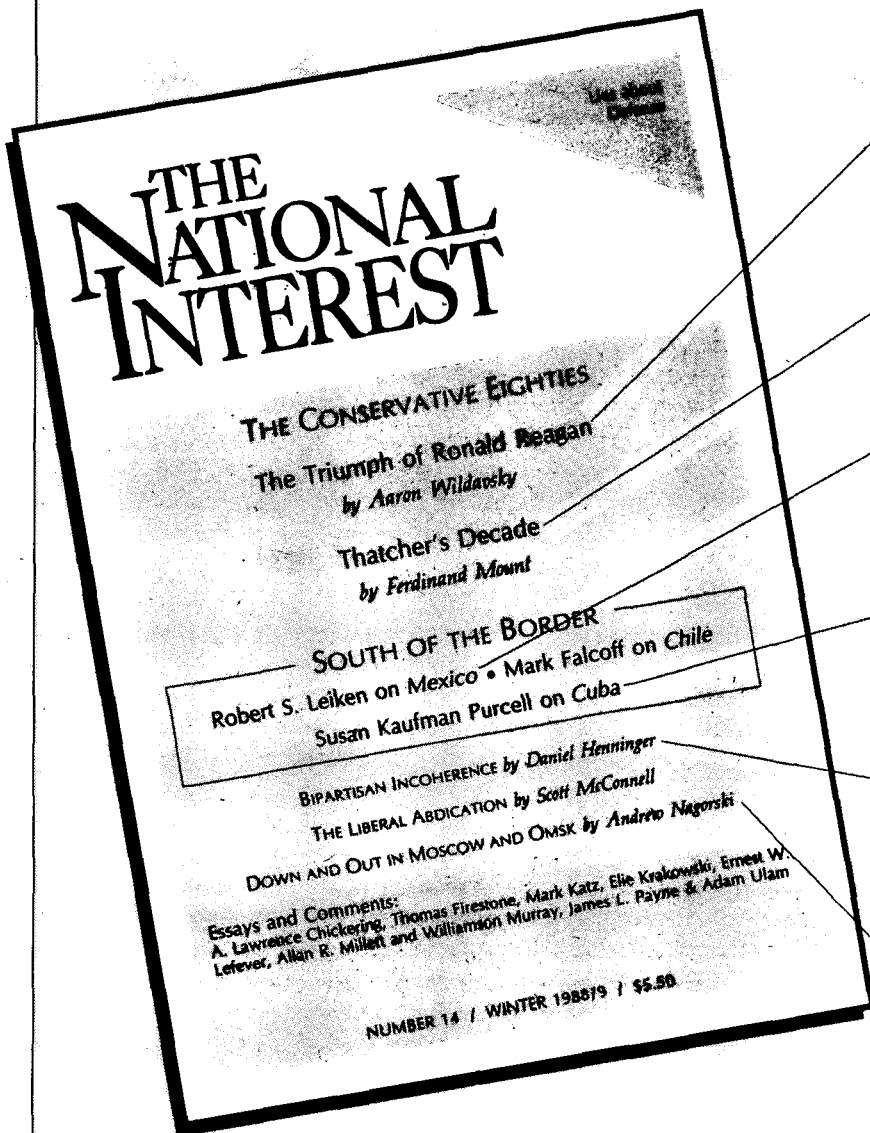
The questions posed by Ledeen—"Is

evolutionary change in Iran possible? Can the United States exert some sort of leverage over Iranian affairs? Are there legitimate channels to pro-Western Iranians who are loyal to the revolution, but in opposition to its more extreme policies?"—are not the central ones, but can be answered easily enough. There is every reason to believe that the Iranians do not want to become part of the Soviet

empire and will do whatever is necessary to avoid such a fate. Islamic fundamentalists can become pro-American amazingly quickly (witness Afghanistan). There were more important questions that were not asked: Was Iran winning or losing the Gulf War? Was it in the American national interest for the war to continue, or for one side to emerge victorious? Negotiations with Iran might have helped

answer some of these questions. Selling arms implied a tilt, which was precipitate, and thus brought about a no less precipitate tilt in the opposite direction. Had the discussion stayed away from the unanswerable and ultimately meaningless questions as to who and where were the moderates and what was the best way of helping them, perhaps these follies might have been avoided. □

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Raleigh Trevelyan/Touchstone Books (Simon and Schuster)/\$12.95 paper

Jennifer Howard

Now that the worship of Demon Colonialism has fallen out of fashion, people sometimes forget that the dirty imp affected its acolytes as strongly, sometimes as harshly, as it did those oppressed by them. Take one of the most emotional case histories: that of the British in India. Born from the mingling of commercial and military opportunity, the British presence in the subcontinent never forgot its pragmatic origins; but as it grew it crept outside the cradle of the merely mercantile and began to look at India as a proving ground for the qualities it most admired: honor, sportsmanship, duty, self-sacrifice.

It was not, then, simply a case of milking the sacred cow until the udder ran dry. If their interest in India had been based only on pecuniary greed, the British would not still be endeavoring to reconcile themselves with their subcontinental past. Like malaria, India has gotten into their blood, and periodic recurrences of this fever appear as films (*Gandhi*), TV series ("Jewel in the Crown"), and, naturally, books, *The Golden Oriole* being among the latest in a long line of titles given over to the subject.

Its author, Raleigh Trevelyan, was born in India (the Andaman Islands, to be precise) in 1923, making him a member of one of the last generations to grow up under the Raj—"a tribe," as he puts it, "that is becoming extinct." At the age of eight he went to school in England, and though he returned to India for the occasional family visit, he never lived in the country again. After serving in Italy in World War II (experiences that formed the basis for two previous books, *The Fortress* and *Rome '44*), Trevelyan embarked on a career in publishing.

But he never could shake his youthful memories of India, where, as Lowell Thomas wrote of Rudyard Kipling, "it was as an Anglo-Indian child that he grew up, surrounded by adoring *ayahs*, white-robed *khitmatgars*, *hamals*, *bhistis* and the rest of the innumerable native servants that make up a *Sahib's* household." Trevelyan would probably not appreciate the comparison to Kipling, and at any rate he had only one

ayah, the long-suffering Nanny Spicer, to watch out for him. Nonetheless, his childhood in India had been vivid enough that he began to plan a journey back to his youthful haunts, namely the Andaman Islands, Kashmir, and what is now northern Pakistan, where his father, an officer in the 93rd Burma Infantry (later the 5th Battalion of the 8th Punjab Regiment), was transferred soon after Raleigh's birth.

In preparation for this journey, Trevelyan began to read accounts and memoirs of the Raj and "was struck by their intensity of feeling, something that is hardly to be found from other outposts of Empire." He also tracked down the Trevelyan clan members who had preceded him in India, notably Charles Trevelyan, an administrator and reformer in the mid-nineteenth-century British Civil Service, and Thomas Macaulay, best known as a writer of histories but also a high-ranking member of the British Civil Service and Charles's brother-in-law as well.

So all in all Raleigh Trevelyan made five journeys back to India between 1977 and 1984, braving diplomatic and vehicular hazards in order to return to Kashmir, and then swinging southward in search of the other Trevelyans. The result: autobiography and family his-

tory layered into essays on "what it was like to have lived in India at different times," with the physical India framing the whole adventure.

Trevelyan begins, logically enough, with his parents and their lives in the Gilgit Agency, part of the North-West Frontier Province then, and now part of Pakistan. Trevelyan's father, Walter, a dutiful if drab husband, father, and officer, typified the military man of the British Empire's twilight in India. First captain of the garrison of the penal colony at Port Blair in the Andaman Islands, Walter and family were subsequently transferred to Gilgit in the province of Kashmir, near the Karkoram mountain range. "where three empires meet."

Here Walter served, under the curious "Agency" arrangement that the British had in areas that were technically still independent dominions, as Military Advisor to both the native government and the British Political Agent, an official supposed to keep an eye on the tribal goings-on in the sometimes restless frontier area.

Ringed by the Himalayas, those "barren grey-ribbed mountains with violet shadows," the Trevelyans inhabited a dun-colored bungalow in a community that numbered nineteen Europeans and three pianos. (one of them a baby grand). When Trevelyan came back to Gilgit, he found a golden oriole singing in the chinara tree in the garden of his old bungalow, just as one had been singing when he had last left decades before.

Contrary to reputation, the British in such "outposts" did not dress for dinner. They did, however, engage in active pursuits so idealized by the ethos of the Raj; Raleigh recalls days spent on ponyback, while his father, having

few border intrigues to attend to, "played polo and tennis, fished, went on shoots and stalked snow leopard, measured glaciers, paid courtesy visits to *mirs* [local chieftains] and *rajahs* and was entertained by them." A strenuous, if not demanding, life.

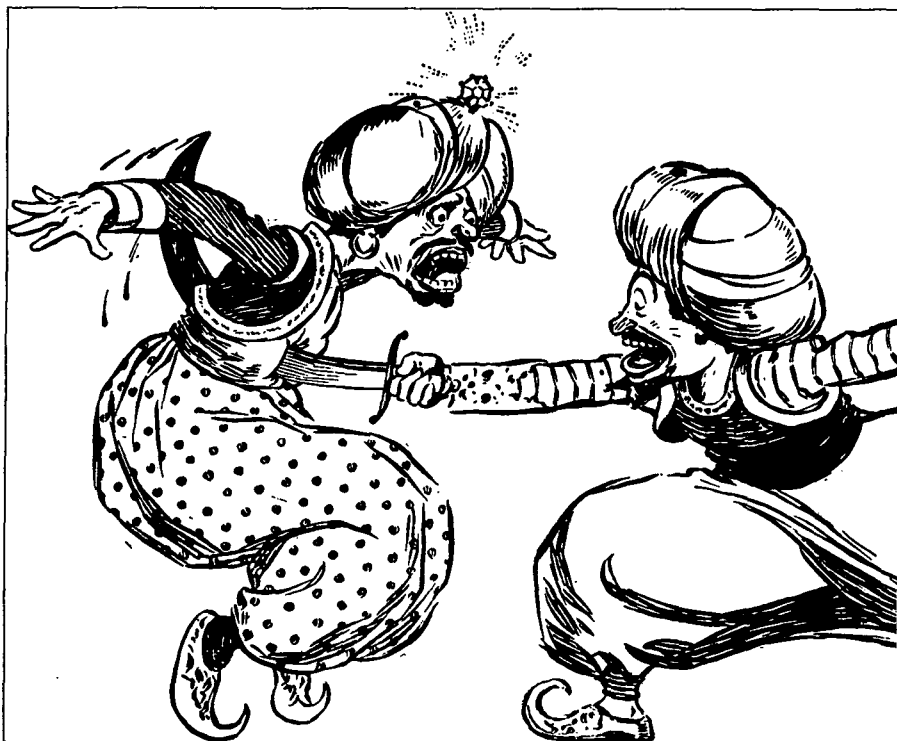
And yet things had not always been so idyllic at Gilgit. Discussing the frontier, Trevelyan notes the vigilance that was required of nineteenth-century Political Agents during the days of the most byzantine moves in the Great Game: the Anglo-Russian competition for suzerainty in the North-West Frontier Province. More than one spy, as Trevelyan relates, met a bad end among the confusing jumble of tribes, with their conflicting allegiances, intertribal warfare, and distrust of outsiders.

To the south, in the more settled provinces that housed the heart of the British Administration, perils tended toward the bureaucratic (with deadly exceptions such as the Great Mutiny of 1857). In search of Charles Trevelyan and Thomas Macaulay, Raleigh Trevelyan journeyed through the Punjab and to Bengal, to Delhi, Cawnpore, and Calcutta, "that city of palaces," of porticoes, colonnades, piazzas, palms, and banyans, described by Bishop Heber as smelling like a greenhouse" (this before Mother Teresa's time).

Charles Trevelyan and Macaulay exemplified a "higher cause" British attitude toward the ruling of India. Charles, the son of an Evangelical Somerset clergyman, and Macaulay, the son of the abolitionist Zachary Macaulay and also brought up an ardent Evangelical, keenly felt a Christian duty toward India; the British, they thought, were there not for personal profit but for the betterment of the native population. Each took an aggressively reformist stance, pressing for the teaching of English in native schools, freedom of the press, equality before the law regardless of color, and the abolishment of certain barbaric native practices such as *suttee* (the ritual immolation of the Hindu widow on her husband's funeral pyre), and other innovations.

Seeking as they did to impose Western ideals on a non-Western population, Trevelyan and Macaulay inevitably came into conflict with the "Orientalists," who believed that the British should not try to improve the Indians' condition but instead increase the natives' awareness of their own glorious past. They were, in Raleigh Trevelyan's words, "prepared to assimilate themselves as much as possible to their Indian surroundings and learn about the customs and heritage of the Indian 'golden age.'"

Trevelyan, Macaulay, and the others at loggerheads with the Orientalists got



Jennifer Howard is an editorial assistant at the New York Review of Books.

the title "Anglicists." In some cases they took a dismissive view of Indian culture, as witness Macaulay's statement that he had "never found one among them [the Orientalists] who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia."

And yet Trevelyan makes a good case for the more far-sighted side of the Anglicist philosophy. Charles, for instance, wrote in *On the Education of the People of India* that

the existing connection, between the two such distant countries as England and India, cannot, in the nature of things be permanent . . . whether we govern India ten or a thousand years, we will do our duty by it. . . . By governing well, and promoting to the utmost of our power the growth of wealth, intelligence and enterprise in its vast population, we shall be able to make India a source of wealth and strength, with which nothing in our past history furnishes any parallel.

Although this sort of paternalism doesn't go over well nowadays, Trevelyan agrees that India brought out in many of its British overlords a sense of higher instincts. "It had not all been hypocrisy, exploitation, lust and plunder," he writes. ". . . There had also been a degree of selflessness among a great many who had served in India and given their lives to it."

Nevertheless, *The Golden Oriole* does not attempt to sidestep some of the messiest puddles in the large field of Britain's association with India. Some ten Trevelyan kinsmen died in the bloody massacres at Cawnpore during the Great Mutiny of 1857, when enlisted Sepoys fired first on their British officers and then turned the sword on the wives and children of those officers. The nastiness of Cawnpore is brought out through letters written by its victims and by relatives who visited the site soon after the massacres. British-instigated violence gets equal time, as when the accounts of family friends are quoted to evoke the horror of the Amritsar Massacre of 1919, when British-led troops opened fire on a crowd of unarmed Sikhs gathered to visit the Golden Temple.

And finally there is India itself, as seen by Raleigh Trevelyan and by the Trevelyans before him: Charles and his wife, Hannah, Macaulay, Charles's son George Otto ("not a very great sportsman. He shot a domestic cow by mistake; one hopes that it did not belong to Hindus"); George Otto's son R. C. Trevelyan the poet, who traveled with E. M. Forster on the author's first trip to India in 1912; and a host of other near and distant relatives and associates. Their impressions are recorded alongside one another, allowing the

book to slice through past and present simultaneously.

So at Agra, Raleigh Trevelyan writes: "No photograph, no model, no water-colour by a zitella [spinster] can prepare one for the real thing. It shimmers, it has an aura, its proportions are perfect. It is sublimely sad. . . ." And so R. C. Trevelyan: the Taj "far exceeded everything I thought possible." And so Charles,

writing to George Otto of his mother's reaction: "Mamma has had to confess that there is a beautiful thing in India—the Taj."

Trevelyan passes no judgment on the Raj; he merely lets it speak through the observations of those who knew it. And through those observations India itself speaks; the country forms the medium in which the tesserae of Trevelyan's researches and journeys

are set. Taking a step back from *The Golden Oriole's* mosaic, one sees in it an image of the British as most quintessentially themselves when they held India, an impression captured in an anecdote of tiger shooting. "Never face a tiger on the ground," was the advice of an old hunter to a new arrival in India. But, he added, if you must meet him on the ground, "face him like a Briton." □

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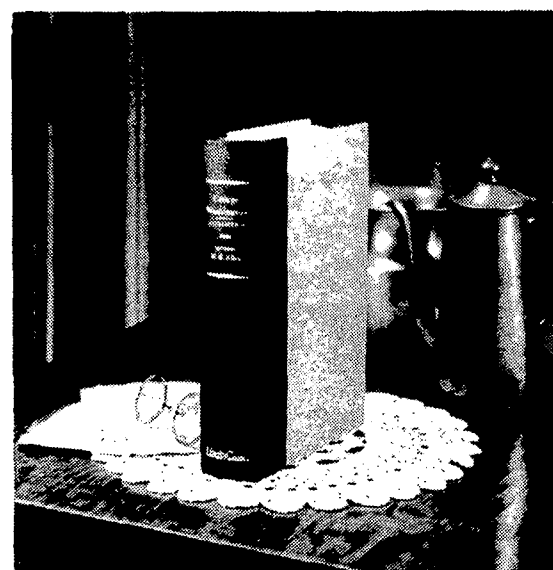
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A SINKING ISLAND:
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THE MECHANIC MUSE
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George McCartney

There are two Hugh Kenners. The first is a factual reporter of the early twentieth-century literary scene. This Kenner enjoys an encyclopedic grasp of his period, which he brings to bear on individual works with dazzling results. The second is a pundit given to grand cultural statements. This Kenner is cavalier, cranky, and unconvincing. You'll find these alternate Kenners on display in his two most recent books.

The Mechanic Muse (1987) is a short, provocative exploration of one of Kenner's favorite themes: the role of modern technology in the literary imagination. *A Sinking Island* (1988) is a wandering excursion into the whys and wherefores of England's supposed decline as a literary power. It's filled with sweeping generalizations, supported with an oddly selective body of fact.

Let's consider the differences.

George McCartney, the author of *Confused Roaring: Evelyn Waugh and the Modernist Tradition* (Indiana University Press), teaches at St. John's University in New York City.

In *The Mechanic Muse*, Kenner praises Ezra Pound for discarding conventional poetic forms. The typical Pound poem, he tells us, is built up with sharply etched details that "are simply present to one another in the same way as the stars that make up one constellation." It's not surprising that Kenner should endorse this method. His best critical writing proceeds along the same lines.

Kenner is a master of laying bare the hidden connections between a literary work and the world in which it first appeared. At a time when fashionable critics have been turning inward, arguing that literature is entirely self-referential with nothing substantive to reveal beyond its own textual systems, Kenner continues to set his gaze resolutely outward. Instead of indulging in another hermeneutic discussion of T. S. Eliot, he chooses to explore the links between *The Waste Land* and its urban context. It's the first "telephone poem," he explains, "its multiple voices referable to a massive short-circuit at the central exchange." He argues

persuasively that it was the typewriter, as much as any other influence, that changed the nature of modern poetry, giving the poet unprecedented control of how his work would appear on the published page. This simple fact helped to free poets from the tyranny of fixed metrical patterns. He finds it suggestive that as the Wright brothers were lifting off at Kitty Hawk in 1904, James Joyce was preparing for his own literary flight by adopting Daedalus as his narrative persona.

The Mechanic Muse displays Kenner at his best. His constellations are both clever and illuminating, reminding us as they do how each new technology radically alters the way we imagine our world. It's only when he steps back to attempt a galactic summing up that things go awry.

In *A Sinking Island*, Kenner reaches for a large cultural statement. What he comes up with, however, resembles a tired academic joke. It's the one that American graduate students of a certain sophistication used to spring whenever someone brought up the subject of modern British literature. "Modern British," a wag would inquire incredulously, eyebrows vaulting for his hairline. "You don't mean the Pole, the Yank, and those two Irishmen?" The point of this witticism was that the only "English" writers worth discussing were either immigrants (Conrad and Eliot) or outlanders (Yeats and Joyce). Kenner seems to have taken the jest seriously.

The scribblers in Merrie Olde England just aren't what they used to be, Kenner laments. They had their chance after the twenties, but they've slacked from the pace set by his select list of anointed modernists. (Kenner has generously expanded the roster, admitting to his pantheon another Irishman, Samuel Beckett, and the technically Canadian Wyndham Lewis and the debatably American Pound.)

When Kenner mentions other writers, it's usually to dismiss them. Of those who came after World War II, he yawns, and I quote, "Yes, yes Amis; yes, yes, John Osborne." And that, folks, is it! England's leading satirist and its most famous problem-playwright merit nothing more than this briefest of Olympian nods. This is astounding in a book that begins by announcing its intention to survey the current state of English letters. We look in vain for any discussion of Aldous Huxley, Ivy Compton-Burnett, George Orwell, Joyce Carey, Henry Greene, Iris Murdoch, to name only a few of the many omissions. Evelyn Waugh, Kenner allows, was a genius, but of a "minor order." (This of a novelist who will undoubtedly continue to command an

audience long after Lewis and the later Joyce become exclusively classroom figures read for historical instruction rather than aesthetic pleasure.) Philip Larkin and John Betjeman are trotted out for a hoot. Imagine, Kenner tsks, Larkin reports that he reads nothing more challenging than detective fiction and cares nothing for modernist writers! Although relentlessly ironic himself, Kenner seems remarkably deaf to the same strategy in others.

In *The Mechanic Muse*, Kenner proposed that "beauty is incarnate thought," an enigmatic formula derived from his idol, Pound. Whatever else it may suggest, this aphorism apparently means that an author who doesn't pose intellectual conundrums isn't playing in the literary big leagues. Thus in *A Sinking Island*, he demotes W. H. Auden by demonstrating that his seeming difficulties are not difficult after all. Auden, it turns out, wrote "easy" poems. Go stand in the corner, Wystan, and don't come out until you incarnate a decently difficult thought in a sufficiently beautiful line.

Kenner has fallen into a familiar pedagogical trap. He's a teacher, and teachers are supposed to interpret texts. If a poem or a novel needs no interpretation, then the teacher's role is put in question. What can you do in a classroom with, say, a novel such as Orwell's *Coming Up for Air*? It may present a compelling view of lower-middle-class life between the wars, but in doing so it largely explains itself. It's neither elaborately stylized nor historically distant. As such, it doesn't require any special feats of professorial explication. It's, sigh, easy. Accordingly, by a twist of logic that's as specious as it's self-serving, such works cannot be considered "serious" literature.

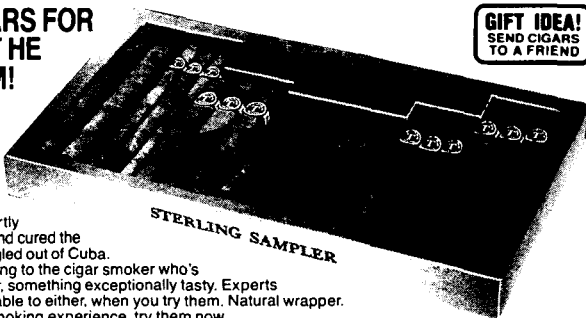
In short, Kenner is a gnostic. His priestly dedication to the modernist liturgy puts him at odds with the plain spoken and distorts his critical vision. This is why he can't resist quoting Auberon Waugh, who recently went on record saying that he was "fed to the teeth with the Modern Movement and everything it has produced." Kenner assumes that we, his American audience, will laugh at what he takes to be Waugh's benighted philistinism. Furthermore, that Waugh addressed this to an "intelligent reading public" in the *Times Literary Supplement* is for Kenner more proof that there is no longer a serious English literature. But, instead of laughing at Waugh, as Kenner would have us do, there are two excellent reasons for laughing with him. First, as Kenner surely knows, Waugh, like his father, has made it his stock-in-trade to explode conventional pieties, one of

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which is the assumption that modernist artists are unimpeachable cultural heroes. Second, even among those convinced of the movement's accomplishments, there is a growing weariness with the endless din of ever subtler commentaries and ever more prurient biographies that continue to follow in its train. The production of texts about texts has become all too industrial, tireless, and mechanical.

But not for Kenner, apparently. He remains bewitched by modernist difficulty, an acolyte serving the willed mysteries of a few early twentieth-century authors.

And this is a shame because when Kenner gets off his modernist high horse, he's rarely less than fascinating. His discussion of H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895) in *A Sinking Island* is a case in point. He's able to show how Wells's first novel cut across both social and aesthetic class lines.

After tracing its origins in pulp fiction, Kenner speculates tellingly on its parallels with Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, published four years later. We learn of Henry James bicycling over to Wells's home. (Yes, the master of fine consciences on a bike!) James was so taken with Wells's science fiction that he suggested collaboration. ("I hope you are thinking of doing Mars. . . . Let me in there.") Kenner even supplies a lively parody of what this might have led to. ("It was not altogether disagreeably unfitting, rather, given the case, all too unbeguilingly not to be evaded, that his lot, as it presented itself to Camshaft, was to be, at the final tick of the dread clock, to close fingers precisely *his* and to close them precisely on the trigger of the afterburner.")

It's moments like this that keep me waiting for Kenner's next constellation. □

HOLLYWOOD DAYS, HOLLYWOOD NIGHTS: THE DIARY OF A MAD SCREENWRITER

Ben Stein/Bantam Books/\$7.95 paper

J. Anthony Daniel

With first person narrative—especially diaries—you cannot always trust the writer. Sure, Ben Stein tells us in the first sentence of *Hollywood Days, Hollywood Nights*: "This diary is authentic. It is not a novel disguised as a diary." But that is rather like the Crete telling St. Paul that all Cretans were liars. Like the movies that are Stein's business (just called "the industry" by those who are in it), his diary is full of glittering surfaces, seductive looks, and sentiment galore. The movies are about illusion. Stein's diary, however, is about reality. Parts of the book we just can't buy; the sentiment doesn't ring true, the boom mike protrudes, and we realize Stein is playing a role, delivering lines. Yet despite it all, the diary hangs together, moves briskly, and entertains. And that is why, in the end, we trust that what Stein is saying is true: the diary is just imperfect enough not to be illusion; it feels real.

Much of the book, though, is made up of nicely realized moments. It takes us from the fall of 1985 to early summer, 1986. Stein has not lost his eye for that old Hollywood shtick, nor his ability to characterize—and complete—

ly debunk—with one deft stroke. In one well-turned passage, a studio head has called Stein to tell him how much he loves a script, only to discover that he has made a mistake and called the wrong writer. Stein corrects the studio man, outlining the script Stein had actually sent, then records the executive's reaction and the ensuing discussion:

"You mean that thing about the congressman having the affair with the college girl? That was sick. That was really a sick idea. Who would ever want to go with something like that?"

"Well, it worked out pretty well for Stanley Kubrick," I said.

"In what? In 2001? I don't remember any of that older man-younger woman stuff."

"No, in *Lolita*."

"What's that?"

"It's a movie. It made a lot of money. About Humbert H. Humbert and Lolita. His little girlfriend."

"Who?" T. asked sharply.

"Humbert H. Humbert and Lolita," I said.

"Who are they?" T. asked. "People in some book, or what?"

Sometimes Stein makes his point not by terseness, but by excess. He piles detail on detail for horrifying effect, as when an old acquaintance (now a talent agent) graphically describes fellatio in a closet. Stein faithfully records his friend's words and his own amazed and fascinated replies to the

man (who, California style, ends every description with a question).

There are other, pleasanter moments in the diary—particularly when Stein talks about children or animals. He loves dogs—perhaps a bit too much (Stein's relation with his German short-haired pointer Trixie is, well, a trifle lurid and unseemly). He spends

time at nursing homes, taking abused dogs to visit neglected old folks. Stein shows us the wonderful transformation that comes over these people who live "in a linoleum and vinyl waiting room preparing for eternity":

A flood of animation washes over them. Their torpor vanishes. Their eyes snap in to focus. They reach out their hands for the fur. Their hands stop shaking. Suddenly,

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■ Syria is a "client" of the Soviet Union. It's their most trusted ally in the region. It is the Cuba of the Middle East. The principal enemies of the USSR and Syria are the United States and Israel. Ironically, Syria has great understanding of Israel's role as defender of Western interests. Because Syria realizes that it's only Israel that stymies Soviet hegemony in the Middle East and insures U.S. influence in the area and in the Gulf region.

■ Syria is the most destabilizing influence in the Middle East. It is in war-like conflict with every one of its five neighbors. Syria claims large areas of Turkey. Over the years, Syria has launched many armed incursions against Jordan and it is only the threat of being confronted by Israeli military force that has prevented Syria from attempting a full-fledged takeover of that country. There is mortal enmity with Iraq and its leaders, which has caused Syria to make common cause with non-Arab Iran in the destructive Gulf War. Syrians consider Lebanon to be part of their own country and have now virtually occupied and annexed it. But their main fury is directed against Israel, because it represents an intolerable "non-Arab presence" in the area, because it has wrested the Golan Heights from Syria, but mostly because it is (rightly) perceived as a bulwark of Western influence and civilization, both of which Syria totally rejects.

■ Elimination of U.S. influence in the Middle East is where Syrian and Soviet wishes intersect. The interests of the Soviet Union are global and those of Syria regional, but their aims coincide. The Soviet Union is, of course, desirous to see the U.S. retreat from the Middle East, enabling the Soviet Union to extend its dominion over the entire region, which is close to their own strategic "soft underbelly". It would also give them

control over the oil reserves of the Persian Gulf, the lifeblood of the Western world. Syria enthusiastically cooperates in the effort to dislodge the U.S., because the U.S. and its ally Israel stand in the way of the dream of "Greater Syria".

■ Syria's immediate military aim is to build to "strategic parity" with Israel. This would enable Syria to wage war with Israel, if necessary without the assistance of any of the other Arab States. To that end, it has so far acquired over \$19 billion worth of the most advanced and sophisticated Soviet armament. This includes the most advanced Soviet fighters, the most advanced missiles, and major capability in chemical weapons, the most formidable and sophisticated air defense system, a tank force greater than that of France and England combined, and a promise by the Soviet Union of atomic weapons for "when the need arises". "We Syrians are not afraid to push the button", says Defense Minister Mustafa Talas.

■ Terror is the most pervasive aspect of the Syrian regime. Syria perceives of terror as a legitimate tool for furthering its national objectives. That terror is conducted by Syrian organizations sponsored by or affiliated with the government, or indirectly through "clients", primarily the Palestinian, Iranian and Libyan terror factions to whom Syria extends warm hospitality and support. Syria uses terror against Israeli and Western targets, or against Arab elements that do not conform to the Syrian policy line. But they reserve their most brutal terror against those suspected of internal opposition. In 1982, President Assad put down a rebellion in the town of Hama. Over 25,000 people were ruthlessly killed. *The New York Times* said President Assad "... turned half the town into a parking lot".

Syria is the leading ally of the Soviet Union and the outstanding enemy of the U.S. in the Middle East. The Syrian regime is one of unmitigated terror, of human rights violations, of ruthless persecution of political and religious minorities — especially, of course, the pitiful remnants of the Jewish population, who are not allowed to emigrate and are kept as hostages in the country. Syria is in conflict with every one of its five neighbors. Its political and military aim is the destruction of Israel, the establishment of "Greater Syria", and the elimination of any influence of the United States in the immediate area and in the Persian Gulf.

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the old woman who was in a trance is alive, alert, connected with the warm affection of the moment.

Stein is by turns confused, saddened, and titillated by the California children with whom he loves to hang out. Mostly, these are teenage girls. Doing research on modern education, Stein sits in on classes at an L.A. high school and gets invited to the prom. Over and over, he meets students who have sharp minds, but who wouldn't know Rasputin from an orangutan—children who “went to schools that babysat but did not teach, watched TV instead of reading books, and planned only on the future being better than the past.” On two separate occasions, Stein meets girls who don't know the difference between Washington State and Washington, D.C. Here is a conversation between Stein and his youthful assistant, Sara, who claims to be “good in history”:

“Do you know what great national event Abraham Lincoln presided over?”

“I sure do,” Sara said. “The Gettysburg Address.”

“No, I mean what great national catastrophe.”

“The Gettysburg Address.”

“No, I mean more like what was the event of which the Gettysburg Address was a small incident?”

Sara looked bewildered. “Give me a hint.”

“It was a war.”

“The Vietnam war.”

“No, not the Vietnam war.”

“Then I don't know.”

“The Civil War. Abraham Lincoln was president during the Civil War. His election precipitated the Civil War.”

“When was that?” Sara asked suspiciously, as if I might be making it up.

“Well, it was about eighty-seven years after the founding of this country. How old is the United States of America?”

“Thirty years?”

The girl-children don't seem to have any difficulty with Sexual Attraction 101, however. If Stein gets a bit carried away with his gaggle of groupie-

ingenues, it is because there is so much to get carried away with. No wonder the man takes on *Lolita*.

For all the enticing side attractions, the diary is principally concerned—sometimes desperately concerned—with life under the Hollywood big top. Stein, like all good cultural critics, is a moralist. His is a plea to Hollywood and for Hollywood—not to lose the dream, the essential promise, that anything is possible and everything will work out in the end. He has a vision of what he is trying to do with his life, which he tenaciously and passionately holds dear, even flaunts. Stein's ability to capture this vision in words is not entirely trustworthy. Like an early D. W. Griffith short, sometimes he is very long on pathos and a bit contrived. One entry in particular, in which Stein walks alone up a hill in Santa Cruz, delivers a heavy-handed sermon on the mount that draws an extended analogy between religion and “the established church of American life, the Cinematic Faith.” Stein rolls on and on with it like a poorly edited rush, until we realize the man is not kidding; he believes “this is not foolishness. This is my birthright as an American.”

Bullfeathers. American movies are precisely “foolishness.” They are an escape, and as J.R.R. Tolkien noted, there is nothing wrong with escaping from a poorer to a better world for a while. We come back refreshed, happier. But we come back. Ben Stein wants to stay.

When Stein is more specific, he is more convincing. Perhaps the best entry in the book concerns his day on the set of *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*. He played a (now somewhat famous) monotoned social studies teacher. John Hughes, the teen-film director, was impressed with Stein's plain, nasal voice and asked him to do a ten-minute monologue on the most boring subject Stein could think of. Stein delivered a hilariously tedious lecture on the Smoot-Hawley tariff act. At the end of his performance, the cast and crew gave him a standing ovation. Stein captures his response concisely and with power:

I have no idea whether my scene will stay in the movie. I have no realistic hope that the afternoon on Stage 16 will change my life. This is what I do know: on most days I wonder what I'm doing in Los Angeles, why classmates from college who cannot add and subtract are making ten million dollars a year in junk bonds, why I have never even been invited to be a *member* of P.E.N. . . . how I am going to pay the pool man, and why I have wasted my one and only life. Today was different.

Stein, unmistakably, is telling the truth here. Much of the diary is a roller coaster ride from the poised, emotional

heights of such moments to the stomach-wrenching twisting and turning of trying to make a living in Hollywood while avoiding disillusionment. Stein calls this low-down feeling the “L.A. flu.” “It comes and it goes,” he says, “depending on what you have to do that day or whether you are just going to be spending another day wishing you were Michael Eisner.”

A Porsche 928 is the mechanical embodiment of Stein's turmoil. He curses and worships the thing. Most of the time, the damned car is broken, but when it runs . . . “Can't beat it with a stick. A boy with a blue leather jacket and his girlfriend with orange hair and orange tights called out to me, ‘Hey, buddy, buff car.’” Stein so unaffectedly *loves* the feeling of driving a great car and being noticed in it that we are carried along with him, charging through Beverly Hills in a red Porsche, drawing looks from beautiful girls. Unfortunately, his blues are, for the most part, convincingly blue, too.

Stein's most successful attempt to say, in general terms, why—in the end—working in Hollywood is so grand, is a little manifesto in which he pronounces filmmaking the last American frontier. The idea of America, of the vast frontiers, freed those who came, and those who imagined themselves coming, from hopeless mediocrity. The pioneers could dream of and attempt to make real a better, happier life. In the same way, the movies allow us to imagine and prod us to act. Stein, as a maker of dreams, is delighted with his calling:

I am only a tiny player in the game. I have been beating my brains out against a cement wall here for ten years when I had lifetime job security in the East. But that was a job. My work here, sporadic as it is, is pioneering on the frontier. In a small way, but still in a way, I am part of the enterprise which builds commensurate with man's imagination.

So, we believe him. Despite the glister that is not gold, despite the occasional solipsistic rapture, we believe him. Stein has connected with something real, and he shows it to us. Through the nasty, brutish greed and meeting-lust of Hollywood, Stein makes out the wispy, luminous edges that are faint but sure evidence of the hidden power of the movies—and of the town that makes them: “The point is that the dream is always there, mixing seamlessly with the real, so that no one truly in the business knows where the fact ends and the fantasy begins. That is the glory of Los Angeles life—the ineluctable mingling of what is and what could be if life were a dream.” □

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CORRESPONDENCE
(continued from page 9)

As someone who at least takes the time to read, Mr. Queenan should know, at minimum, that a character's unemployment, social status, failure, or loneliness serves most often as metaphor for some greater spiritual emptiness. We're not reading stories about job descriptions, but stories that speak to the danger looming behind displaced, beaten, or forgotten values.

Conservatives, in their relentless quest for a return to traditional values, also recognize this danger, or why go on as they do about moral decay? Serious writers are doing with fiction what conservatives are doing with lecterns and editorials: What's happened to human values? Will they ever be recovered? I find no place in the stories of Raymond Carver in which unemployment or drinking is glorified or celebrated. They are bare-boned predicaments with oftentimes harsh consequences. The "morbid charm" Mr. Queenan concedes in Carver is actually the attempt by Carver's characters to salvage some bit of hope, value, in the world despite the fact that they are not (to the puzzlement of Mr. Queenan) "go-getters." Unblessed with corporate savvy, Carver's characters do not blame the infrastructure or the White House; it's much more personal than that. And that they try to endure while resigned to being financial/social have-nots is both a noble and conservative notion. Feel-good tales about "knights and knaves" are born of an unconstrained vision and are better left to the escapist cartoons Hollywood produces.

If Mr. Queenan puts a character's occupation at the top of his literary checklist, let's take a quick look at two American masters typically lionized by the right: Flannery O'Connor and William Faulkner. Perhaps Mr. Queenan would like to talk investments over drinks with The Misfit. Better not give him a bogus stock tip! Or maybe Mr. Queenan is having the hard-working Bundren family out to the house this weekend for finger sandwiches. He might suggest they wear shoes and dispose of that rotting corpse, lest they soil his pristine floors. And how about that future executive Quentin Compson and his downright good taste to have chosen the Charles River in which to drown himself. And after reading *Wise Blood*, how could Mr. Queenan not consider making a career move to preaching?

The fact is that American fiction has, since its beginnings (what did Young Goodman Brown do for income?), dealt with these types because

they are the kinds of characters that hit readers where they live—the gut, the heart. And their conditions may indeed signify an aspect of our own lives that needs re-evaluation.

Even one lucky enough to have such a dynamic job as a "writer for *Baron's*" may sometimes need to be reminded of his own spiritual apathy, of the common suffering that connects us all. The only way a story about some-

one "who ran the IBM System 360" will be of any significance to the majority of readers is if this bundle of excitement realizes that a career with computers does not a spiritual life make. That revelation will make him human, make We The People care about him.

If Mr. Queenan is still unsatisfied, he can find his favorite characters living their oh-so successful

lives in Wang commercials. I've seen them, and the question is: Who cares?

—Stan Sousa
North Bellmore, New York

I commend Mr. Queenan on his timely and important article, "Character Assassins." It's about time a writer for *Baron's* lowered the boom on the effete literary establishment of this country

Are Catholics STUPID ?



There is a tenacious myth in America that says Catholics are stupid, ignorant, and superstitious. Moreover, there is a prejudice among modernist Catholics that those Catholics who really believe in the Bible, the creeds, tradition, and the Church are intellectually feeble. After all, it's said, **there aren't even enough intelligent orthodox Catholics to support a decent journal of opinion.**

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and pumped a little fresh air into the fetid world of contemporary fiction. Here I've been reading short stories, novels, and poems all these years for their literary merit alone. To think of the time and emotional energy I've wasted in relating humanly to fictional characters, experiencing their catharses, appreciating the drama inherent in their suffering. Why wasn't I ever taught that all

I needed to do in order to judge good fiction was to take a simple job profile of an author's characters? (Did it really take Mr. Queenan only two weeks to do a vocational survey of all the characters in Beattie, Carver, Paley, and Michaels?) Is there some conspiracy going on in American schools? I now know there is at Iowa, where I happened to spend a few years in the MFA pro-

gram as a poet—I always did wonder about those weirdos out there writing all the time—but what about my high school and college teachers who never said one word about those real “losers” in Dostoevsky, Dante, Dickens, and Hawthorne, to name just a few? I have forgotten them already. Thank you, Mr. Queenan, for at last providing a clear profile of “the right kind of people.” I wonder if you would now mind compiling a reading list. I have read all of Louis Auchincloss and Ayn Rand and find Bret Easton Ellis, Jay McInerney, and Tom Wolfe exciting, but not quite savvy enough. May your sharp wit continue to grace these pages with more American caveats against the dreck of subversive crapehangers.

—Chard deNiord
Washington, Connecticut

grains. They listened to him. They ate what they could. They swallowed the dark bread. It was like daylight under the fluorescent trays of light. They talked on into the early morning, the high, pale cast of light in the windows, and they did not think of leaving.

These *are* the “right kind of people,” Mr. Queenan. They work. They love. They grieve. Perhaps you should spend another few weeks doing a humanity profile in the stories of the authors you've mentioned. Not all people are human, and those who aren't are definitely the wrong kind.

—Jim Westcott
New Haven, Connecticut

Joe Queenan replies:

Mr. Sousa: Faulkner and Flannery O'Connor were hilarious rustics who wrote about other hilarious rustics. I don't see the connection with Beattie, Inc. I have never been hit where I live. That's one of the reasons I live in the suburbs. Besides, this is a Sammy Davis Juniorism and does not belong in a serious letter to the editor. The idea that a crummy job is a “metaphor for some greater spiritual emptiness” reminds me of a friend who kept referring to his wife's abortion as “my Vietnam.” One day I told him, “Ed, your wife's abortion isn't your Vietnam; it's her abortion. Not everything bad can be a metaphor for something else. Some things are bad all by themselves.” In other words, a terrible Leonard Michaels story isn't a metaphor for a terrible Grace Paley story. It's a free-standing, self-contained terrible story.

Chard deNiord admits to having a Master of Fine Arts in poetry, yet I detect no signs of remorse in his/her/Chard's letter. As for Mr. Westcott, people who live in New Haven, Ct., and who think you should sit around eating brown bread the day after your kid dies, should be very careful about how they use the words “tragic” and “stupid.”

Kudos

I always suspected that Jimmy Carter was a small man, a sort of wart on the end of the nose of born-again Christianity. Joseph Rodota's “Eminento” to our littlest ex-President (TAS, December 1988) has not only justified my suspicion but enlarged the wart.

—Irene Prater Dell
Carl Junction, Missouri

It all really comes down to this: if a nation doesn't want its laws despised, it has to take at least some trouble to see that they aren't despicable. Had America discharged that duty, Operation Rescue would not have been necessary.

Thanks to Tom Bethell for a fine piece (“Operation Rescue,” TAS, December 1988)—and to God for not leaving us without a remnant.

—C. H. Ross
Nashville, Tennessee

Mr. Queenan displays a tragic contemporary ignorance—or is it stupidity—for the fact that characters, not faceless professionals, populate good fiction. Queenan attempts to spread a tendentious tyranny of confusing the democracy of art with the business of politics and patriotism. It never occurs to Queenan that the destitute protagonists in the stories of Carver, Ford, Oates, Ozick, Wolff, and Atwood—not to mention the Iowa misfits—are more interesting to their authors than copacetic breadwinners. It is a sign of these “smooth times,” to borrow a phrase from Amos, that a business writer would vilify his country's short story writers for concentrating on suffering “weirdos.” To judge fiction primarily on the basis of its characters' economic and professional status is an offense to anyone's healthy imagination. If Queenan thinks the characters of today's short story writers are “boring, condescending, and monotonous,” primarily because they're jobless and haven't yet met “the right kind of people,” I wonder what kind of power fiction he would suggest, or why he doesn't just watch “Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous.” What does fiction have to do anyway with his concern that only “losers, drunks, wackos, addicts, failures, creeps, loners, schlemiels, and people who don't get tenure” will characterize this age? My suspicion is that Queenan knows that good fiction is more enduring than good history and that if some talented author doesn't lionize the exploits of the eighties elite quickly, their “wholesome” romance will be lost. But I wonder what's so mediocre about the following passage from Carver about a middle-class mother and father receiving solace from a baker the day after their young son has died accidentally:

“Smell this,” the baker said, breaking open a dark loaf. “It's heavy bread but rich.” They smelled it, then he had them taste it. It had the taste of molasses and coarse

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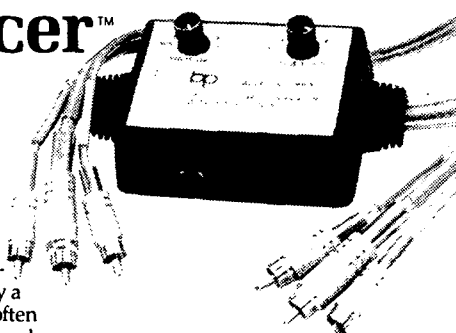
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Their commitment serves as an inspiration to those of us who are involved in the day-to-day task of publishing *The American Spectator*. In gratitude, and as a means of drawing

more immediately on the guidance and advice of our supporters, we have established an annual dinner at which members of The American Spectator Advisory Group (donors of \$10,000 or more) and The American Spectator Washington Club (donors of \$1,000 or more) can meet with *TAS* writers and editors (and one another) to discuss the magazine's editorial direction.

Nineteen eighty-eight's dinner was held November 10 at the Yale Club in New York City with more than 150 guests in attendance, including several *TAS* writers attracted not only by the opportunity to meet our donors but also by the promise of a free hot meal and a three-hour open bar. Among

those attending were Chief Saloon Correspondent Joe Mysak (of course), New York Correspondent William Tucker, John Simon, Lionel Abel, Micah Morrison, Terry Teachout, Richard Brookhiser, and Joe Queenan. A full list of Advisory Group and Washington Club members appears on page 49.

Following dinner, guests were welcomed by Ronald Burr, the *Spectator's* publisher, who cited the continuing success of the programs sponsored by The American Spectator Educational Foundation. In his remarks, R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr., discussed America's crucial need for a "two-party media" that disseminates information and ideas other than those resounding in

the echo chamber of Washington journalism. Robert Shafer of Pfizer, Inc., then introduced the evening's main speaker, Tom Wolfe, who stressed the *Spectator's* willingness over the last twenty-one years to challenge the reigning liberal orthodoxy of America's cultural elite.

We extend special thanks to Richard Gilder, Jr., of Gilder, Gazendon & Company and to Pfizer, Inc., for sponsoring the dinner. If you are interested in joining either the Advisory Group or the Washington Club, or would simply like to learn more about The American Spectator Educational Foundation, simply clip and return the coupon on page 49, or call Ron Burr at *TAS*.



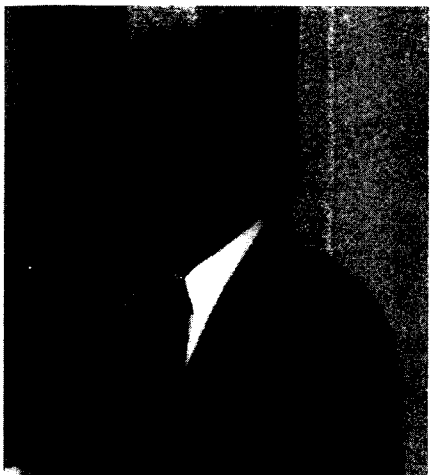
Tom Wolfe.



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Ronald Burr welcomes the guests.



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CURRENT WISDOM

Gainesville Sun

The sad somniloquy of James A. Michener the same night some cad put garlic in his tapioca pudding:

This year's election scared me. It was conducted with a brutality and lack of attention to basic issues that appalled, and the success of its ugly strategies flashed signals that this was the kind of electioneering we should expect during the next three national campaigns of this century.

What frightened me? The tactics that proved so effective were those which Joseph Goebbels found useful in destroying the German Republic in the 1930s. . . .

Michael Dukakis was not defeated, he was destroyed, and that kind of victory does not serve the republic well. If persisted in, it could lead to American-style fascism.

[December 11, 1988]

New York Times

Soap opera atop the editorial column of the esteemed *Times*:

Perhaps not since Woodrow Wilson presented his Fourteen Points in 1918 or since Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill promulgated the Atlantic Charter in 1941 has a world figure demonstrated the vision Mikhail Gorbachev displayed yesterday at the United Nations.

Like the others, the Soviet leader called for the basic restructuring of international politics—for the rule of law, not force; for multilateralism, not unilateralism; and for economic as well as political freedoms. Like them, he used occasion and oratory to command the global stage. Unlike them, he promised to lead the way unilaterally, by reducing Soviet military forces and converting defense industries to peaceful uses.

Breathtaking. Risky. Bold. Naive. Diver-sionary. Heroic. All fit. So sweeping is his agenda that it will require weeks to sort out. But whatever Mr. Gorbachev's motives, his ideas merit—indeed, compel—the most serious response from President-elect Bush and other leaders.

[December 8, 1988]

New Republic

Sociological science as practiced on the cut-the-crap pages of the revolutionary *New Republic*:

Without Ralph Lauren and his expert molding of American taste, George Bush, Andover '42, Yale '48, a.k.a. "Poppy," might never have been elected. For more than a decade, Lauren has been hooking middle-class and lower-class Americans on WASP aesthetics and pseudo-English gentility; the country has gone from Ralph Lauren clothes, to Ralph Lauren home furnishings, to Ralph Laurenesque architecture, design, and art. Get ready for the Ralph Lauren presidency.

[December 12, 1988]

Washington Post

Rockets go off when Mary McGrory meets the fellow with the map of Florida on his forehead:

Mikhail Gorbachev, somebody said, sounded as if he were running for president of the world. His speech before the United Nations was an experience in political oratory that our recent campaign in no way prepared us for. The Soviet leader unfurled a blueprint for saving the planet and democratizing the world. No "thousand points of light," no "I'm on your side," no one-liners, no sound bites. This was cosmic stuff, an announcement of a new order, one in which the Soviet Union will march side by side with, although a step ahead of, other nations toward peace and reason on Earth.

Never mind that back home his grand plans for efficiency and honesty are making snail's progress. That is one of the reasons he was here. The folks in Moscow had to see that Comrade Mikhail can set the world on its ear, outclass any Western orator and boldly proclaim that the erstwhile number one police state is going to show the world the way to the rule of law and decency.

[December 8, 1988]

New York

Pete Hamill, metaphysician, reveals his thesis on the impossibility of rape:

When I was a young reporter for the *Post* in late 1960, I was once assigned to cover Jack Kennedy during one of his stays at the Carlyle hotel. He had been elected but had not yet taken office. "We hear he brings the broads in two at a time," the editor said. "See what you can see." There was nothing to see that night, perhaps because of my own naive incompetence as a reporter, or because I was joined in my vigil by another dozen reporters and about 100 fans who wanted a glimpse of John F. Kennedy. Most likely, Kennedy was asleep in his suite while we camped outside the hotel's doors. But I remember thinking this was the best news I'd ever heard about a president of the United States. A man who loved women would not blow up the world. Ah, youth.

[November 28, 1988]

Washington Post

A budding New Age Orwell speaks out on the correspondence page of the laudable *Post* just before 50 mg of Valium are administered:

The *Post*'s coverage of the pig truck accident on Route 95 north of Baltimore was inappropriate and unprofessional ("Pig Roundup Near Baltimore," *Metro*, Dec. 2). Joking about this accident was obviously easy, unless you were witness to the carnage.

Though some pigs survived the accident

with no apparent injuries, several were severely injured. Some had internal organs hanging outside their bodies, some had broken bones, many were in shock.

The state police, who are responsible for administering Maryland's anti-cruelty statutes, did not do so. They shot pigs that were trying to cross the northbound lanes of Route 95, while allowing uninjured animals to be severely beaten and cruelly treated by highway workers.

I saw men beat a pig that was lying in a puddle of diesel fuel, obviously in great pain. The pig finally dragged himself out of the ditch and pulled himself (his hip was apparently broken) to the trailer that was to take him to the slaughter-house. The individuals involved in the accident clean-up—state police included—should be charged with cruelty to animals. This accident is really only the final cruel step in the pork production process. A diet based on animal protein is cruel to the animal, bad for one's health and ecologically devastating. Anyone who saw this accident would feel sick next time he thinks about eating pork.

—Brad Wellinghouse
Silver Spring

[December 14, 1988]

Washington Post Magazine

Dr. Richard Cohen on how to deal with resident Stalins if you do not happen to know what Stalin did, or what a leading American vacuum-cleaner tycoon does:

The Soviet Union offers us few models to emulate, but it does offer one: the willingness to admit a mistake and change place names. Stalingrad, site of an epic World War II battle, is once again Volgograd. Indeed, the names of Stalin and other communist leaders have been sandblasted from the facades of all sorts of buildings and erased from the map. That's not because Stalin was without his accomplishments, but because there is no honoring them without also honoring his incredible excesses and abuse of power. The principle is a worthy one and should be applied to Hoover as well. His bureaucratic achievements do not excuse or overshadow his abuse of power.

[November 6, 1988]

New York Review of Books

On the occasion of Governor Michael Dukakis's sacrifice to *vox populi* the venerable *NYRB* asks its resident H. L. Mencken to confect another purée of modern Mencken, and Murray Kempton dutifully runs his blah once again through the Cuisinart and presents it to the flies:

Even now they were reduced to a heavy lidded night of flickering hope that they might have held George Bush to fewer than 400 of 535 electoral votes. Meager reward for prayer that such a result would be, its possibility offered cause for higher suspense than the Democrats had lately known in any recent hour after the polls closed in Kentucky.

They began to say at once that they would have won with a candidate less maladroit than Michael Dukakis. . . . Still, if he must be judged a low card in a Democratic hand that looked as if it had been dealt no very high ones, except the singular Jesse Jackson, Dukakis had to contend with an electorate increasingly skewed to the middle class in times whose comparative peace and glistening, if inequitable, affluence provide scant promise for the challenging party.

[December 8, 1988]

In These Times

The condition of America's moral and intellectual superiors on the evening of George Bush's triumph and their renewed befuddlement:

Faced with a speaker who couldn't speak and who didn't seem too happy about being there, people started filing out. Some tried—and failed—to get their money back. But most stayed, disappointed perhaps by the lack of content but satisfied in another more visceral way: here was someone who was having a harder time coping with the vision of President Bush than they were.

All sense of order left the show. [Hunter S.] Thompson swayed on the edge of the stage, bent double, holding his microphone to the mouths in the crowd, a grapefruit shard dripping from his other hand. It was as if the good doctor, in his own speechless, mutant way, was asking for absolution.

At times the best he could do was to make sounds like a raccoon that got hit by a pickup truck. Some of the audience didn't mind too much; the grapefruit-splattered spectacle of Thompson's incompetence was a fine metaphor for the American electoral system. The foggier Thompson became, the more he stumbled, the more the crowd cheered. To others, who had once been genuinely moved by his insights, Thompson's self-destruction was evocative of the American political process careening out of their control. Just as Dukakis had failed to articulate his message to the people, their hero was having a hard time getting a complete sentence out.

It was a perfect way to spend that evening, after all. When the house lights dimmed and the talking head of George Bush appeared on the screens above the stage and said, "This is a moving night for all of us, and you can't help but be moved," the senselessness made perfect sense at last.

—Andrew Galarneau

[November 16, 1988]



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